

THESIS

TENSIONS IN SERVICE-ORIENTED TEMPORARY ORGANIZATIONS:
THE EMERGENCE AND MANAGEMENT OF TENSIONS IN STUDENT ORGANIZING

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

TENSIONS IN SERVICE-ORIENTED TEMPORARY ORGANIZATIONS: THE EMERGENCE AND MANAGEMENT OF TENSIONS IN STUDENT ORGANIZING

Previous communication scholarship has focused on tension as a component of everyday organizing. However, minimal research has explored it in tandem with temporary organizing and servant leadership. This case study explores the discursive enactment of servant leadership and how it contributes to tension emergence and management as presented by Putnam, Fairhurst, and Banghart (2016) and Baxter & Montgomery's (1996) in the context of a temporary organization and organizing during COVID-19. Through the use of semi-structured interviews and a focus group, the study theorizes a tension-filled and tension-centered conceptualization of servant leadership. Furthermore, this research identifies how disruptions to everyday organizing, such as a global pandemic, can urge tensions to the forefront of organizations. The findings in this study also encourage scholars to interrogate popular leadership enactments, question the role of tension in the discursive enactment of leadership, and explore the implications of temporary organizing in term-limited organizations.

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DEDICATION

For Ion,

Your encouragement, support, and love made this all possible.

And for Caleb,

The world is open to you. Find a dream and pursue it.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“Lead with a heart, but protect your heart at the same time” (Olivia, student member of Associated Students Collective and research participant).

I worked with Associated Students Collective (ASC), a student government at a large public university, for four years during my undergraduate degree. Each year the organization went through the same cycle and heartache with its members. It would begin with the newly elected executive members assuming office early July and the student staff, either new or returning, adapting to the executives’ goals for the organization. This transition prompts the creation of tensions as the two sides attempt to negotiate and fulfill expectations for each other. The student staff place expectations on the executive members relating to their role as a servant leader—leaders who prioritize serving their members over decision-making—whereas the executive members expect the staff to deliver towards whatever organizational goal they set. The tensions slowly become manageable as expectations are negotiated and fulfilled (see Figure 1).

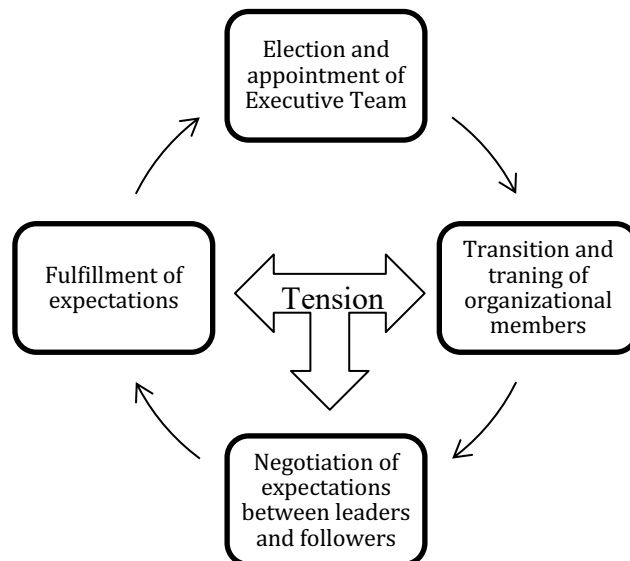


Figure 1.

The Cycle within Associated Students Collective.

While this may be the end of the story for other organizations, ASC repeats this process every year with a new batch of executive servant leaders making each adjustment period only temporary. Each year it becomes a new temporary organization. Temporary organizations are defined as a group of people working to complete a task or accomplish a mission within a limited period of time, like one year in ASC (Goodman & Goodman, 1976). ASC differs from many organizations in that their C-level employees (Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer, etc.) change every year due to their election cycle. Despite the existence of this form of organization, minimal organizational communication research has explored organizing processes in temporary organizations. We still know very little of how the organization's limited timeline factors into how leaders and members interact, how expectations are communicated, and how organizational goals are carried out.

Furthermore, existing organizational research has not explored tensions in this kind of service-oriented temporary organizations. Tension is defined as “opposing forces in complex organizational environments” (Putnam et al., 2016, p. 66). Trethewey and Ashcraft (2004) called for more empirical work to adopt a tension-centered view to organizing and explore how organizational members—signifying both leaders and followers—experience tension in their everyday lives. The tension-centered approach has become popular within communication studies with over fifteen articles appearing in eight prominent communication journals over the past five yearsⁱ. Despite this bloom in research, there is still much to explore regarding tensions between leaders and members in the temporary organizational setting. Furthermore, research is limited on the impact of virtual organizing during the COVID-19 pandemic on tension emergence. Using ASC as a case study, this thesis project explores tension emergence and management in a service-oriented temporary organization, contributes theoretically to

communication research on leadership and tension, and offers practical insights for tension management as it relates to leadership and organizing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Specifically, this thesis project contributes to the following areas of research: (a) temporary organizing, (b) servant leadership, and (c) communicative constitution and management of tension (see Figure 2). To begin, minimal research has explored the role of tension in temporary organizations. Existing literature discusses the potential that temporary organizations dismiss tension rather than manage it (see Lundin & Söderholm, 1995; Tabassi et al., 2019); however, my previous experience has shown that ASC actively works to manage tension within the organization. This allows for the current literature on temporary organizing to be challenged by exploring how tension is created and managed, not dismissed, within this temporary organization. In addition, this thesis expands on current literature within servant leadership by emphasizing the discursive enactment of this leadership style rather than its traits. By exploring how servant leaders approach tension management, this project reveals a tension-centered and tension-filled reconceptualization of servant leadership. Finally, this thesis also contributes to empirical research on tension in organizing by investigating a unique organizational form: a service-oriented temporary organization.

Furthermore, this thesis has practical implications for temporary organizations. This thesis focuses on a singular case study and provides practical suggestions for ASC; however, there are thousands of student governments in higher education of United States that can also benefit from general suggestions that are developed from this study. Additionally, the findings in this study can be extrapolated to other organizations who institute term limits in their leadership (e.g., government institutions and national professional organizations). It also provides insight regarding discursive interactions that foster tension and tension management techniques that are

successful in this unique organizational type. These insights regarding how organizational members perceive tension and how that relates to their tension management strategy produces guidance to develop training that sensitizes them to tension as it appears within their organization. Lastly, this project provides a snapshot of an organization during the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic and how the pandemic's disruption of everyday organizing contributed to tension emergence.

In what follows, Chapter Two provides a review of both foundational and current literature on temporary organizing, leadership, and tension. It also provides insight as to how the three areas of research coalesce into this larger research study. In Chapter Three, I discuss the methods for data collection and analysis while providing an overview of ASC. Chapter Four is a presentation of findings as it relates to tension emergence, management, and servant leadership. Lastly, in Chapter Five I discuss the interpretation of findings, practical implications, future research, and limitations to the study.

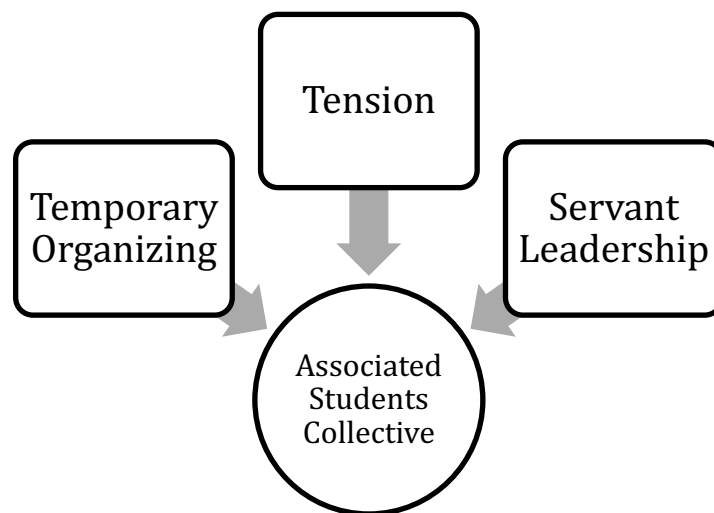


Figure 2

The Relationship Between Literature and ASC.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Associated Students Collective (ASC) is a unique organization that combines temporary organizing with service leading. However, this organization is plagued with a repeating cycle of tension. These three aspects (temporary organizing, servant leadership, and tension) garner their own individual areas of research, but have not been interwoven together. This chapter reviews the individual areas of research and present research questions that aim to bring these distinct concepts together.

Temporary Organizations

Temporary organizations have been defined as “organizations *within* organizations” (Shenhar, 2001, p. 395, emphasis in original) composed of “diversely skilled people working together on a complex task over a limited time period” (Goodman & Goodman, 1976, p. 494). They have two critical components: a time limitation and action orientation (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995). There is a deadline, expiration, or time limit set on a temporary organization upon conception. For some, this time limit is conditional to a project completion. For others, the expiration date is reflective of an upcoming event that is the culmination of the organization’s work. Either way, the limitation on time fosters the action orientation. The temporary organization must quickly work to accomplish the mission they were created for within the set time (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995).

In the case of Associated Students Collective (ASC), the executive team election terms dictate the time limitation and the combination of the executive team’s campaign promises with the strategic plan provide the guidance for action throughout the year. The factor of a limited term fosters action within the organization as there is a focus on accomplishing the tasks at hand

due to the urgency that the time limitation creates (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995). This factor allows the members of the organization to focus on their “time-bound” tasks as a guide for organizing (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995, p. 437). The combination of specific goals with limited time to accomplish them requires the organization to constitute around their set goal(s). The following sections review constituting features, time sequencing, and research on temporary organizations.

Constituting Features of Temporary Organizations

One constituting feature of temporary organization is specialized teams who help constitute the organization. The specialized team is created to center around the specific tasks at hand; however, the organization is then “dependent on the will, commitment and ability of individuals for [its] creation, development and termination” (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995, p. 441). This dependency allows for the organization to be constructed by both members and leaders within the team as they collectively work towards their time-sensitive goals. In ASC, new team members are hired in coordination with the new executive team and formed into various departmental teams to work on different initiatives.

Another constituting feature is that the temporary organization is set within a “parent organization” that is permanent, but helps provide some structure to the temporary organization (Tornes & Kramer, 2015). In the instance of ASC, the parent organization is the established student government with its own history and policies while the temporary organization is the one-year-team established with each election cycle. The professional staff most often provide the parent structure as they have been advising the student leaders anywhere between four to thirty-one years. Their experiences with previous student leaders help them develop a mental model for how the organization can operate throughout the one-year term. Their historical knowledge and

understanding of policies positions them as structural components that allow the temporary nature of the organization (the students) to achieve their goals within their limited time.

Four Sequencing Concepts of Temporary Organizations

There are four sequencing concepts of a temporary organization suggested by Lundin & Söderholm (1995): (a) action-based entrepreneurialism, (b) fragmentation for commitment-building, (c) planned isolation, and (d) institutionalized termination.

Action-based Entrepreneurialism. Action-based entrepreneurialism is the first step of constitution. For a temporary organization to begin formation, an entrepreneur must interpret a need for the organization by identifying the guiding tasks or goals (Lundin & Söderholm; 1995). ASC was established in the mid-1960's by the university with the purpose of representing the collective student body; however, new student leaders would need to be elected from the student body every year to embody the general interests of the current student population. In the process of being elected, the student leaders adopt the role of the organization's entrepreneur for the year as their platform and leadership provide the basis for that year's goals.

Fragmentation for Commitment-Building. The fragmentation for commitment-building step is met by specifying the time for establishment and termination of the temporary organization (Lundin & Söderholm; 1995). This sequence also requires the specification goals for the set time (Lundin & Söderholm; 1995). By establishing the election terms, ASC defines the beginning and termination of the temporary organization, each bookended by an election. The goals for the year are established by the strategic plan and campaign goals of the elected officers.

Planned Isolation. The third step, planned isolation, is the development of protections for the planned action process by creating organizational boundaries and negotiating adherence

to the goals set forth in the fragmentation for commitment-building stage (Lundin & Söderholm; 1995). ASC fosters transparent boundaries during the later portion of the spring semester as they recruit candidates for various member and leadership positions with most positions closing by the end of the semester. Following the appointment of members and election of leaders, the organization enters the transitory and training period in which goals for the upcoming year are agreed upon. Communication to external entities reduces as the organization turns inward to establish itself for the upcoming year. In this period of isolation, the goal is to reduce external communication to establish goals and timelines for the year. ASC traditionally goes through this process during the summer months (June through August) as the organization meets regularly for training and to create a strategic plan for the year.

Institutionalized Termination. Finally, the temporary organization ends in the institutionalized termination stage (Lundin & Söderholm; 1995). In this stage, the temporary organization is dissolved and has ideally met their goal (Lundin & Söderholm; 1995). For ASC, their termination stage begins with the “transition dinner” in which the previous year’s accomplishments are celebrated and the incoming officers are introduced. On June 31st, the termination stage is finalized as the next year’s team assumes office on July 1st.

Research on Temporary Organizations

The scholarship surrounding temporary organizations has slowly increased throughout the past twenty-five years. Burke and Morley (2016) provided an overview of the scholarship on temporary organizations and discussed potential tensions that could arise in these organizations. This scholarship has ranged from studies on temporary organizations such as convention planning teams (Tornes & Kramer, 2015), multicultural construction teams (Tabassi, Abdullah, & Bryde, 2019), and film sets (Bechky, 2006).

Tornes and Kramer (2015) investigated role negotiation and identification of volunteers for a pop-culture convention. They utilized sensemaking theory to understand how volunteers interpreted their experiences volunteering for a temporary organization. Tornes and Kramer (2015) found that ineffective communication from organizational leaders created role ambiguity and uncertainty for the volunteers. This forced volunteers to make decisions on their own and face feedback at the end of their shift from their supervisors. This feedback would either confirm their decisions or admonish the volunteer for making such a decision. The variance in responses fostered the feelings of uncertainty within volunteers as well as feelings of ambiguity in defining what their role actually was. Although Tornes and Kramer (2015) do not directly mention tension, there is the potential to investigate tension between volunteer autonomy and their role expectations in responding to different situations.

Minimal literature explores the management of tensions in temporary organizations with the exception of Tabassi, Abdullah, and Bryde (2019). Tabassi and colleagues (2019) investigated the impact of conflict management styles on temporary organizations. They used a survey instrument to assess various these within construction project teams in Malaysia. Of the three conflict management styles (cooperative, avoiding, and competitive), Tabassi and colleagues (2019) found that the cooperative (compromising between opposing poles) and avoiding (ignoring the tension altogether) management techniques had positive impacts on the performance of multicultural temporary teams.

Bechky (2006) challenged the common portrayal of temporary organizations as ephemeral and unstable (see: Tornes & Kramer, 2015) through an ethnographic study of film project teams. They argued that temporary organizations have structured role systems that are negotiated in the moment. In this unique organization form, members have a specific role within

the organizational structure, but their role's placement in the structure can be discursively negotiated as the members work together. These discursive negotiations happen through thanking, warning, and joking among organizational members. This study begun to explore how discourse can shape role negotiation, specifically how discourse may shape the expectations regarding the role of leadership in temporary organizations.

To summarize, Tornes and Kramer (2015) unintentionally revealed the tension of autonomy versus role expectations in temporary organizations while Bechky (2006) discussed the importance of discourse in shaping these role expectations. Tabassi and colleagues (2019) defined how cooperative and avoiding tension management approaches can have a positive impact on temporary teams. These empirical studies have laid the foundation to explore the emergence and management of tensions within a temporary organization, including how tension emerges from the discursive construction of leadership expectations.

Leadership

Leadership has often been envisioned as requiring a specific personality type, primarily through the work of leadership psychologists who focus on the personalities of leaders and followers (Fairhurst, 2008). A communicative conceptualization of leadership turned towards defining leadership by the discourse surrounding it while adding considerations of social and cultural implications (Fairhurst, 2009). These scholars refer to themselves as constructionists and conceptualize leadership as socially constructed, suggesting that the meaning and perception of leadership is co-created by organizational members.

Leadership as a Discursive Construction

Social construction is founded on the understanding that meaning is interpreted uniquely from person to person (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). The constructionist approach to leadership

attempts to create an understanding of leadership that accounts for socially constructed meaning. Discursive leadership is not a leader-centric approach that focuses on the leader's personality, managerial style, and behavior; rather, it is a "co-constructed reality" between and among social actors (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010). Social constructionists theorize that leadership is developed in communicative instances between organizational members instead of the leader-centric conception that leadership is defined by the characteristics of said leader (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010). For instance, leadership developed in communicative instances can emerge from conversations amongst organizational members in which they share their expectations of the organization's leaders. In these communicative moments, the concept of leadership in the organization is created and recreated through various interactions between members, but it is never solidified as their experiences change and they alter interpretations of meaning to match the new change (Tourish, 2014). Discursive leadership's focus on co-constructed reality accounts for leadership being constructed through communicative practices such as talk, discourse, and other symbolic media that is shaped by the situation's context and created by people (i.e. social actors) engaging in meaning making. In the instance of ASC, the expectations of the leadership team based on the interpretation of 'leadership' is reworked every year. This new expectation for the leadership team is communicated through the combination of the incoming team's own experiences and historical expectations set forth through policy and the organization's by-laws.

As each situation is up to interpretation of all members involved, the concept that there is a proper leadership response in any given situation is contested by social constructionists (Grint, 2005). In discursive leadership, the name given to the social constructionist perspective, leaders are the managers of meaning (Fairhurst, 2009). They are the individuals in an organization that have the ability and choose to influence other members' realities (Smircich & Morgan, 1982).

The emphasis resides within organizational members' strategic, relational, and discursive aims to influence the perceived realities of their colleagues (Fairhurst, 2009). Leadership emerges from the process in which organizational members attempt to influence the reality of other members (Smircich & Morgan, 1982). In these moments, a leader will guide the collective sensemaking process within the organization, potentially going as far as to frame the event for their followers. They will focus attention on narratives that provide appropriate context and distract from narratives that conflict with their desired framing. These leaders attempting to influence other members most likely perceive that they have an obligation or a right to define other members' realities and are perceived as leaders when they are successful in structuring organizational experiences in "meaningful ways" (Smircich & Morgan, 1982, p. 258). In collectively working to define their reality, organizational members will implicitly or explicitly "surrender" their influence to the leader by choosing not to share their experience with others (Smircich & Morgan, 1982, p. 258). This surrender gives greater responsibility to the leader and allows them to have larger influence over the creation of meaning and experiences within the organization.

The foundation of socially constructed leadership allows for flexibility in the assessment of the variety of communicative responses awarded to any given situation (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010). Therefore, this perspective allows for qualitative research of leadership in which researchers can examine both the perceptions of leadership and communication surrounding leadership from the perspective of organizational members. Socially constructed leadership provides a framework in which leadership studies can be situated by demonstrating the role of discourse in situating leadership. With this intention, leadership phenomena, such as servant leadership, can be (re)examined to discover how meaning is constructed by organizational members and leaders to promote certain leadership expectations within their organization.

Servant Leadership

“Leadership does not occur in a vacuum” (Neubert, Hunter, & Tolentino, 2016, p. 896). It is influenced by organizational members and context. The servant-leader acknowledges both in their leadership (McGee-Cooper & Looper, 2001). Coined by Greenleaf (1977), servant leadership conceptualizes great leaders as servants by nature. This leadership phenomenon has been identified as highly beneficial to organizations due to the leader’s ability to awaken, engage, and develop members by treating them as “as whole individuals with heart, mind and spirit” (van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010, p. 5). This section discusses the discursive enactment, key values, and research trends surrounding servant leadership.

Discursive Construction of Servant Leadership. A servant leader communicates care throughout their work (Greenleaf, 1998; Greenleaf, 2002; McGee-Cooper & Looper, 2001). Greenleaf (2002) stated: “The most important qualification for [servant leaders] should be that they *care* for the institution, which means that they care for *all of the people the institution touches*, and that they are determined to make their caring count” (p. 832, emphasis in original). This discursive centering on care manifests in several forms for the servant leader as they treat each member with “trust, respect, and unconditional love” (McGee-Cooper & Looper, 2001, p. 3). In caring for the organization’s people, they seek opportunities to mentor and develop their followers (McGee-Cooper & Looper, 2001; van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010). The servant leader seeks to mentor all in the organization through thought-provoking questioning, coupled with details regarding the decision during decision-making processes (McGee-Cooper & Looper, 2001). They utilize thought-provoking questioning to engage their members in decision making with the understanding that buy-in from the team is created from this process. By involving the

team in decisions, the ensure that the team will work towards the common goal as people are expected to support what they help create (McGee-Cooper & Looper, 2001).

A servant leader focuses on actions that will foster a collaborative community within their organization. Such actions included being reflective and vulnerable (McGee-Cooper & Looper, 2001). To act reflectively, the servant leader takes time in making decisions and puts a great deal of thought as to the decision's potential impacts on people, both inside and outside the organization. They are also open to criticism and opportunities for growth and do not fear in sharing their own mistakes. In sharing their own mistakes, servant leaders enact vulnerability. They model to their followers that it is acceptable to make mistakes, so long as they use them as learning experiences. The servant leader makes discursive choices that allow them to utilize this vulnerability and inclusive humor—that is humor that does not degrade or humiliate others—to build community within the organization in order to foster member's willingness to share in the decision-making process (McGee-Cooper & Looper, 2001). Stories or testimony of members' experiences are valued at the same level as facts, logic, and proof. Opposing viewpoints are sought out and explored until the servant leader can guide the team to a “creative consensus” (McGee-Cooper & Looper, 2001, p. 4). By believing that all organizational members can grow, take initiative, and support shared efforts, servant leaders foster a community within their team in which collaboration is enjoyable (McGee-Cooper & Looper, 2001).

Discursive Enactment of Servant Leadership. There are a plethora of performative actions ingrained in the concept of servant leadership, many of which stem from the discursive enactment of servant leadership. Laub (2010) identified six guides for action and meaning making that are ingrained in servant leadership: (1) value people, (2) develop people, (3) display authenticity, (4) build community, (5) provide leadership, and (6) share leadership.

Valuing People. Greenleaf (1998) discussed an ethical framework that servant leaders should maintain in decision-making to support the values of organizational members and their development. Before clarification, there was an assumption that utilitarianism was the best ethical guidance as it focuses on making decisions that benefit the most people. However, Greenleaf (1998) argued that a servant leader must make decisions that will not knowingly hurt anyone, directly or indirectly. This moral guidance allows the servant leader to remain true to valuing people as it prevents them from causing any harm. It is a conception of leadership and morality that prioritizes “stewardship, ethical behavior and collaboration through connecting to other people” (van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010, p. 3).

Developing People. In accordance with valuing and caring for people, the servant leader acts to develop their followers (McGee-Cooper & Looper, 2001; van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010). They do so by involving their followers in the decision-making process. In these moments, the servant leader provides context followed by probing questions that aid their followers in reaching a consensus (McGee-Cooper & Looper, 2001). New leaders will emerge from the followers as they share their experiences and help lead the group towards a decision (Smircich & Morgan, 1982). Other members will give away their power in choosing not to share their experience. The servant leader may then pursue the viewpoints of those not sharing to aid them in their development as well. Overall, these moments of mentorship are fulfilling for both to the emerging leader and the quiet follower (Keith, 2015).

Displaying Authenticity. As previously stated, the servant leader makes discursive choices that allow them to be vulnerable when communicating with their followers (McGee-Cooper & Looper, 2001). They express this vulnerability by sharing their mistakes or failings with their team (McGee-Cooper & Looper, 2001). They discursively create an image of a leader

who is imperfect by sharing these experiences. This aspect of imperfection and authenticity overlays with their followers' expectations of a leader. In sharing their mistakes, the servant leader makes leadership attainable to their followers, which is necessary to build community.

Building Community. Aside from being authentic and valuing their followers' development, servant leaders also avoid coercion in favor of persuasion to help build community. Greenleaf (1998) expanded upon the aspect of persuasion:

Such a leader is one who ventures and takes the risks of going out ahead to show the way and whom others follow, *voluntarily, because they are persuaded that the leader's path is the right one--for them*, probably better than they could devise for themselves (p. 44, emphasis in original).

Persuasion is chosen over coercion because it allows the members to decide whether to follow.

The then-followers become a community that chose to support the mission or goal of the servant leader.

Providing and Sharing Leadership. The two final performative actions of servant leadership are providing and sharing leadership. The role of leadership is to oversee the goals, strategy, organization, and implementation of plans in an organization (Greenleaf, 2002). Servant leaders do these things by "establishing priorities, allocating resources, choosing and guiding staff, articulating goals and philosophy, and exerting a sustained pull for excellence" (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 868). The servant leader also uses framing to change action from me/I work to us/teamwork because they work under the assumption that collaborative work and problem solving creates better outcomes (McGee-Cooper & Looper, 2001). Servant leaders seek paradoxes by inviting discussion of opposing truths (McGee-Cooper & Looper, 2001). They utilize thoughtful questioning of their followers to guide them in the decision-making process while working with the assumptions that opposing perspectives can be true simultaneously and that unity is built by valuing differences (McGee-Cooper & Looper, 2001). Through this, they

share the leadership with their followers by respecting and encouraging their followers' autonomy to share their experiences and make decisions when provided with enough context. The servant leader and their followers socially construct each other's expectations as they work together to make decisions and problem solve within the organization.

Tensions in Servant Leadership. Most literature on servant leadership has taken up the tasks of distinguishing servant leadership from transformational leadership (i.e., Parolini, Patterson, & Winston, 2008; Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2003; Smith, Montagno, & Kuzmenko, 2004), developing scale assessments (i.e., Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005), and praising its benefits to various organizations (i.e., Keith, 2015; Laub, 2010; McGee-Cooper & Looper, 2001; Prosser, 2010; van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010). Two recent studies (i.e., Chiniara & Bentein, 2018; Jit, Sharma, & Kawatra, 2016) are particularly relevant to this project as they examined how servant leaders deal with tensions and conflicts in organizations.

Jit and colleagues (2016) examined conflict management strategies used by servant leaders within education, corporate, and government sectors. Based on narrative analysis of fifteen interviews, they found that servant leaders had conflict management strategies that were persuasive and participative. The three strategies most often used were (a) performance of an initial diagnosis of the situation, (b) facilitation of an amicable solution, and (c) impartialness in working towards conflict resolution. Jit and colleagues (2016) also identified several discursive strategies that emerged among the fifteen leaders during their attempts at conflict resolution: self-restraint, patience, composure, and humility. These leaders reflected self-restraint, patience, composure, and humility within their communication to their teams as they attempted to negotiate tensions within the organization.

In a more recent study, Chinaiaara and Bentein (2018) investigated the servant leaders' ability to place their followers' needs above their own and its effect on relationships within the organization as well as on team cohesion. By using the social comparison theoretical framework and data from a survey of 229 employees in a large North American company, they examined perceived leader-member exchange (LMX) differentiation—the variance in relationship levels between a leader and their various followers—within 67 various work teams, a trait that has been linked to positive task performance and service-oriented organizational citizenship behaviors. Chinaiaara and Bentein (2018) found that servant leadership significantly predicted low LMX differentiation and strong team cohesion. As a result, servant leadership can also be linked to positive task performance and service-orientation in teams.

This thesis seeks to delve deeper into the concept of servant leadership by applying the tenets of socially constructed leadership in examining the specific discursive acts that constitute servant leadership and their effects on tension constitution to expand on Jit and colleagues' (2016) work. The following subsection review foundational and current literature on organizational tensions.

Tension-Centered Approach to Organizing

Organizational tension has become increasingly important to organizational research over the last two-and-a-half decades as people are tasked with negotiating formal and informal systems in their everyday world (Trethewey & Ashcraft, 2004). Putnam, Fairhurst, and Banghart (2016) described organizational tension as “opposing forces in complex organizational environments” (p. 66). For instance, an organization may experience conflict between flexibility and consistency (Tracy, 2004). In this tension, the organization values both flexibility and consistency in following organizational policy; however, these two values cannot be enacted

simultaneously which creates feelings of contradiction amongst members as they attempt to balance between the two values.

The tension-centered approach has emerged in response to the intensifying interest in these negotiations. This approach centers on the premise that “organizations are conflicted sites of human activity” and prioritizing examination of tension can foster a deeper understanding of actual practice, further aiding in the development of theory that explicate the role tensions plays in everyday organizing (Trethewey & Ashcraft, 2004, p. 82). Various scholars have focused on distinct aspects of tension such as its formation (Putnam, Fairhurst, & Banghart, 2016), framing (Tracy, 2004), and management (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Christensen, Morsing, & Thyssen, 2015; Woo, 2019).

Formation

Putnam, Fairhurst, and Banghart (2016) developed a “constitutive approach” (p. 66) to tension in organizations, focusing on how actions and interactions foster tension. They argued that tensions are constituted via five key process-based dimensions: (a) discourse, (b) socio-historical conditions, (c) developmental actions, (d) presence of multiples, and (e) praxis. Each of these five dimensions prioritizes different aspects of social interaction and provides distinctive opportunities for tension to arise in organizations.

Discourse. *Discourse* encompasses language, logics, and texts (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2013). This is not to be confused with *communication* as “*communication* refers to the processes of coproduced meaning at unique moments in time, while *discourse* is the medium for social interaction” (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2013, p. 275). There is some distinction between *discourse* (little ‘d’ discourse) and *Discourse* (big ‘d’ discourse). *Discourse*, based on a Foucauldian perspective, is the overarching, societal communication and understanding of a concept

(Fairhurst, 2008; Fairhurst, 2009). It is the systems of thought that provide guidance for social actors as they engage in various situations. Conversely, *discourse* is the more nuanced social interactions (Fairhurst, 2009). It focuses on the small communicative instances, such as organizational artifacts, values, and assumptions, that form together to create larger meanings and organizational culture (Kramer & Dailey, 2019). For example, there is a large portion of societal discourse that positions Mondays in a negative light. The larger representations of Monday as dreary or disliked through societal interactions make up the *Discourse* surrounding Mondays. However, an organization might have an enjoyable staff meeting over breakfast on Mondays. Therefore, the *discourse* might center around how Mondays are relatively enjoyable in the organization due to the staff meeting and free food.

Discourse aids in understanding tension formation as it accounts for how tensions can be enacted (e.g., between big-D and little-d discourses) and responded to by organizational members through texts, co-constructed meanings, and organizational performances, rituals, narratives, and practices (Putnam et al., 2016). These forms of discourse allow tension to become salient as it can expose competing ideas as well as reveal how these tensions are framed within the organization.

Socio-historical Conditions. Tension emerges from socio-historical context through *discourse* (Putnam et al., 2016). These tension-forming *discourses* (i.e. organizational artifacts, values, and assumptions) are rooted in historical periods or at the overlay of meanings originating in the past, present, and future (Putnam et al., 2016). The merging of various meanings can create contradiction, a base form of tension (Putnam et al., 2016). This particular aspect of tension formation recognizes the role of events and eras that foster action among

organizational members and situates contradictions within historical, societal, and organizational contexts (Putnam et al., 2016).

Developmental Actions. *Developmental actions* consider how organizational tensions emerge, transform, and remain over time (Putnam et al., 2016). Essentially, “it is the live action of the present moment” (Putnam et al., 2016, p. 78). Primarily, developmental actions are constructed through the interplay of various organizational practices or rooted in actions and interactions of organizational members that build on each other over time (Putnam et al., 2016).

Presence of Multiples. Putnam and colleagues (2016) account for multiple levels, multiple voices, and multiple tensions in tension formation in the *presence of multiples* dimension. The first component, multiple levels, references the various levels within an organization where tension may appear such as dyads, teams, between groups, and organization wide (Putnam et al., 2016). Putnam and colleagues (2016) approach tensions as “embedded in multiple structures, systems, and contexts” (p. 82). Organizational members interact and combine multiple aspects of their personal and organizational lives as they interact within the organization. These aspects from multiple organizational members build upon one another to help in forming tension as the members interact (Putnam et al., 2016). The various experiences lead to multiple voices and experiences that guide organizational discourse (Putnam et al., 2016). However, the variance in voices and experiences leads to the formation of tension as organizational members struggle for power in defining organizational discourse (Fleming & Spicer, 2008; Putnam et al., 2016; Rudd & Sprague, 2000). Lastly, tensions tend to appear in multiples of their own (Putnam et al., 2016). Just as developmental actions can build upon each other, so can tensions. Tensions and sub-tensions can coalesce into larger instances of contradiction (Putnam et al., 2016).

Praxis. The final dimension, *praxis*, concentrates on the organizational member's recognition of contradictions and paradoxes (Putnam et al., 2016). Their recognition is a reflection of their lived experiences, self-monitoring of behavioral patterns, analysis of existing contradictions, and perception of the nature of their organization's tensions (Putnam et al., 2016; Shotter & Tsoukas, 2014). *Praxis* requires that the organizational member be reflexive about their actions and interactions within the organization while also being knowledgeable about the organization's structures and experiences that promote tension and how they interact within them (Putnam et al., 2016). The organizational member must also choose how they are going to respond, question, and act in response to the tensions present within the organization (Putnam et al., 2016). Their choices, knowledge, and actions can either foster existing tension, build upon tension, or reduce tension. Their personal framing of said tension can influence the choices they make to respond to it.

Putnam, Fairhurst, and Banghart's (2016) constitutive approach provides a framework in which to approach the analysis within this study. The five process-based approaches—discourse, socio-historical conditions, developmental actions, presence of multiples, and praxis—details opportunities for tension to emerge. This study utilizes these approaches to examine precisely how tension emerges within ASC. Ultimately, this grants insight as to how tension can emerge within temporary organizations that emphasize servant leadership.

Tension Management

Tension begins to be managed by organizational members after its emergence. Organizational members' perceptions of tension influences *and* is influenced by how they choose to manage the tension. The members can either choose to promote tensions through the *both-and* or *more-than* management approaches or prevent tension through the *either-or* management

approach (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Putnam et al., 2016). The three approaches are explicated below.

Either-Or Approach. In this management approach, the organizational member attempts to prevent tension. The *either-or* approach involves tactics in which the social actor chooses to respond to only one portion of the tension and ignore the other (Putnam et al., 2016). They treat the opposite tension poles as separate and irrevocably incompatible (Putnam et al., 2016). This management tactic can be utilized by those who frame the tension as a contradiction, paradox, or double-bind as it allows them to choose just one side of the contradiction at a time (Tracy, 2004). Using the same example of tradition versus efficiency, those utilizing the either-or approach would either ignore traditional processes in favor of more efficient processes or choose the reverse.

Both-And Approach. This approach still frames the tension's poles as competing; however, the organizational member or leader acknowledges both poles of the tension if they use this approach. In this approach, the social actor understands that there must be interplay between the opposing poles in order to honor the dynamic nature of social interactions (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). They choose to acknowledge *both* the desire for x *and* the for y and establish the poles as complementary (Tracy, 2004). Let's apply this to the tension of tradition versus efficiency in ASC that was mentioned earlier. With the *both-and* approach, organizational members would understand that traditional processes and updated processes both have an important role within the organization and value the unique aspects of each. This approach prioritizes compromise in order to satisfy both parties involved (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996)

More-Than Approach. This approach allows the organizational member to transcend past the understanding of tension as solely contradictory (Putnam et al., 2016). In this approach,

the social actor frames the poles of the tension as complementary so that they are no longer in competition (Putnam et al., 2016). They create a third option or space in which the tension can be discursively explored (Christensen, Morsing, & Thyssen, 2015; Woo, 2019). This management technique can also be used by those that perceive the tension poles as paradoxical because the technique allows for the organizational member to create a third space that is *more-than* the two options initially presented (Tracy, 2004). If we take the same example of the tension between tradition and efficiency, then we can think of the more-than approach manifesting as organizational members working to develop a process that combines the valuable aspects of the traditional process with the efficiency that technology provides.

Baxter and Montgomery (1996) described the both-and approach while Putnam and colleagues (2016) presented the either-or and more-than approaches to specify how organizational members react to tension. Each strategy affords potential ramifications, such as failing to acknowledge portions of their job with the either-or strategy, that prompts the questions as to why a strategy would be chosen and which works best in to manage tensions, especially in varying contexts

Tension Management and Leadership

Existing research have looked at the intersections of tension management and leadership, covering topics such as tension negotiation and framing in organizations (Mitra & Fyke, 2017), organizational member's occupation and action orientation's impact on their tension management (D'Enbeau, 2017), and organizational leaders' leader-member exchange orientation's effect on followers' tension management (McAllum, 2020).

Mitra and Fyke (2017) examined how organizational tensions were negotiated during purpose-driven consultation in for-profit firms. They conducted two case studies, one focusing

on a corporation who was attempting to train ethical leaders (APCom) and another centering on a corporation's attempts at communicating their environmental sustainability programs (GreenD). Through an analysis of present tensions, Mitra and Fyke (2017) found that although organizational members framed organizational tensions as either complementary or contradictory to a larger societal structure, they sometimes devolved into perceiving the tension as a double-bind. In the instance of APCom, they found that the organization experienced *leader/culture* tensions. This tension emerged through conflict regarding personal development versus organizational development. Organizational members felt that APCom had begun to focus on developing the organization in its entirety rather than focusing on fostering personal development as they had previously done. Although this frustrated the organizational members, they began to frame this tension in a complementary light. They perceived personal and organizational development to be intertwined at APCom and necessary for the company to become competitive.

D'Enbeau (2017) utilized a tension-centered approach to explore how a temporary team at a university addressed tensions between sexual violence response and prevention. They describe two dimensions that impact tension management: occupational orientation and action orientation. D'Enbeau (2017) describes occupational orientation as the influence of a team member's occupation on their understanding of their position on the team, construction of the tension's meaning, and preferred tension management approach. Team members would focus on the values of their occupation in choosing how to respond to a tension. For example, all members of the team observed were professional members of a university and they identified valuing the students; therefore, their chosen management strategies would be reflective of this value. Action orientation referenced how teams will transition between proactive and reactive tension

management as well as their preference between the two. Therefore, if an organizational member identifies as being proactive, they will seek ways to reduce the emergence of tension while a reactive organizational member would rather seek to manage the tension after it has emerged.

McAllum (2020) focused on how on-the-job learning is navigated in high-reliability organizations (HROs). They honed in on the reliability-resilience tension within mentoring relationships in HROs and specific discursive reactions to the appearance of this tension. McAllum found that leaders who preferred to delegate tasks utilized discursive acts such as coaching, mentoring, and coaxing their followers through the tension whereas leaders who were less focused on relationship building discursively employed bossing, controlling, and criticism tactics. The discursive acts linked to delegation promoted participation and positive tension management strategies from organizational members.

Each of these current empirical studies provides further direction in the current trends of tension-centered research: the relationship between tension framing and management (Mitra & Fyke, 2017), the impact of occupation and action preference on temporary team's reaction to tension (D'Enbeau, 2017), and the effect of a leader's overall desire for positive relationship building with their followers on the followers' ability to manage tension (McAllum, 2020). These three empirical studies combined with the literature reviewed culminate to provide a foundation to explore the emergence, framing, and management of tension within the unique organizational form of ASC.

To sum up, drawing from these three areas of research (temporary organizations, leadership, and tension), this study explores how leadership emerged in the negotiations of tensions in a service-oriented temporary organization. Previous literature has not explored the relationship between these elements. It is unknown how the combination of temporary

organizing and service orientation will impact tension and leadership within the organization.

This study addresses these unknowns by asking the following research questions:

RQ 1: How do tensions emerge within the everyday organizing of Associated Students Collective?

RQ 2: How do members address these tensions during their one-year term in Associated Students Collective?

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

To explore tension emergence and management in a temporary organization, this thesis employs a qualitative case study approach. According to Mitra and Fyke (2017), case studies allow for a “situated examination of the communicative practices constituting organization reality” in a format that allows researchers to utilize various forms of data collection (p. 145). Case studies also call for experiential knowledge of the case in question and consideration of the case’s influence on social and political contexts (Stake, 2005). Flyvbjerg (2013) notes that case studies rely on detail and depth of the data. Given the limited literature on tension within temporary organizations—specifically temporary organizations with servant leaders—it is beneficial to seek detailed data in order to provide some understanding to the phenomena of tension within these organizations.

Given the reliance of organizational tension on discourse between organizational members and the foundation of socially constructed leadership presented in this study, this thesis adopted an interpretive worldview. Researchers within the interpretive worldview work with an understanding that “reality is constructed through subjective perceptions and interpretations of reality” (Croucher & Cronn-Mills, 2015, p. 51). Data collection and analysis was approached with the understanding that the tension within ASC is co-constructed by the leaders and members within the organization.

The Case

Associated Students Collective (ASC) [a pseudonym to protect the organization’s confidentiality] is a student government at a large public university on the west coast (WCC). Representing a little over twenty-thousand students, ASC’s mission is to serve, empower, and

advocate for all students of the university. They meet these expectations through various avenues of representation such as advocating on campus-wide and state-wide committees as well as advocating at both the state and federal capitol. ASC also creates programming throughout the year to keep WCC students engaged on campus and provides services such as graphic designing for student-run clubs and organizations.

Another aspect of ASC's mission is recruiting and fostering student leaders. ASC employs forty students within the corporation. These students work from 10-20 hours a week and across three departments: programming, advocacy, and corporate services. Student employees within the programming department can specialize in programming, marketing, videography, or graphic design and focus on creating engaging events as well as promoting ASC to the larger collection of WCC students. Within the advocacy department, student employees focus on external (state-wide and federal) representation, internal (campus-wide) representation, and special projects that aid in developing the corporation. The final department, corporate services, is subdivided amongst services such as a legal clinic in which students can be connected with external lawyers, box office where students can purchase discount movie and theme park tickets, and the front office which handles the clerical work for the organization.

In addition to the student employment, ASC has three executive positions and thirteen board member positions that students can campaign for. Each position is elected towards the end of the academic year by a majority vote from WCC students. While the executive positions are almost always contested with multiple people running for the same position, some board member positions must be filled by an ad-hoc committee during the summer. The executive positions are president, executive vice president, and vice president of finance (see Table 3). The executive members, commonly referred to as "the Execs" by organizational members, receive a scholarship

and hourly pay for their service. They are charged with overseeing the organization and are the front-line representatives of WCC students. ASC's president meets with WCC's president on a monthly basis to discuss student concerns. The board is composed of student representatives for each college on campus and athletics as well as three students who represent the general WCC population and a student to represent sustainability efforts at WCC. They receive a quarterly incentive of a parking pass, money towards food venues on campus, or money for the bookstore. Their responsibilities largely encompass making decisions regarding ASC's policies, budget, and external statements.

The total number of student positions is thirteen, but the board has an additional five positions that professional university members occupy: the executive director of ASC, a cabinet member appointed by WCC's president, the Dean of Students, a representative appointed by and from the faculty, and a representative appointed by and from WCC's staff (see Table 1). These professional members are appointed to the board to foster collective decision making within the university between administration, faculty, staff, and students, commonly referred to as *shared governance*.

Table 1*Associated Students Collective's Board Composition.*

Student Members (n = 15)	Professional Members (n = 5)
Liberal Arts College Representative	ASC Executive Director
Business College Representative	Faculty Representative
Physical Sciences College Representative	Staff Representative
Behavioral Sciences College Representative	WCC University President's Representative (currently Vice President of Student Affairs)
Education College Representative	Dean of Students
International Student Representative	
Student Athletics Representative	
General Student Population Representative (3)	
Campus Sustainability Representative	
Sister Campus Representative	
Graduate Student Representative	
ASC President (non-voting)	
ASC Executive Vice President (non-voting)	

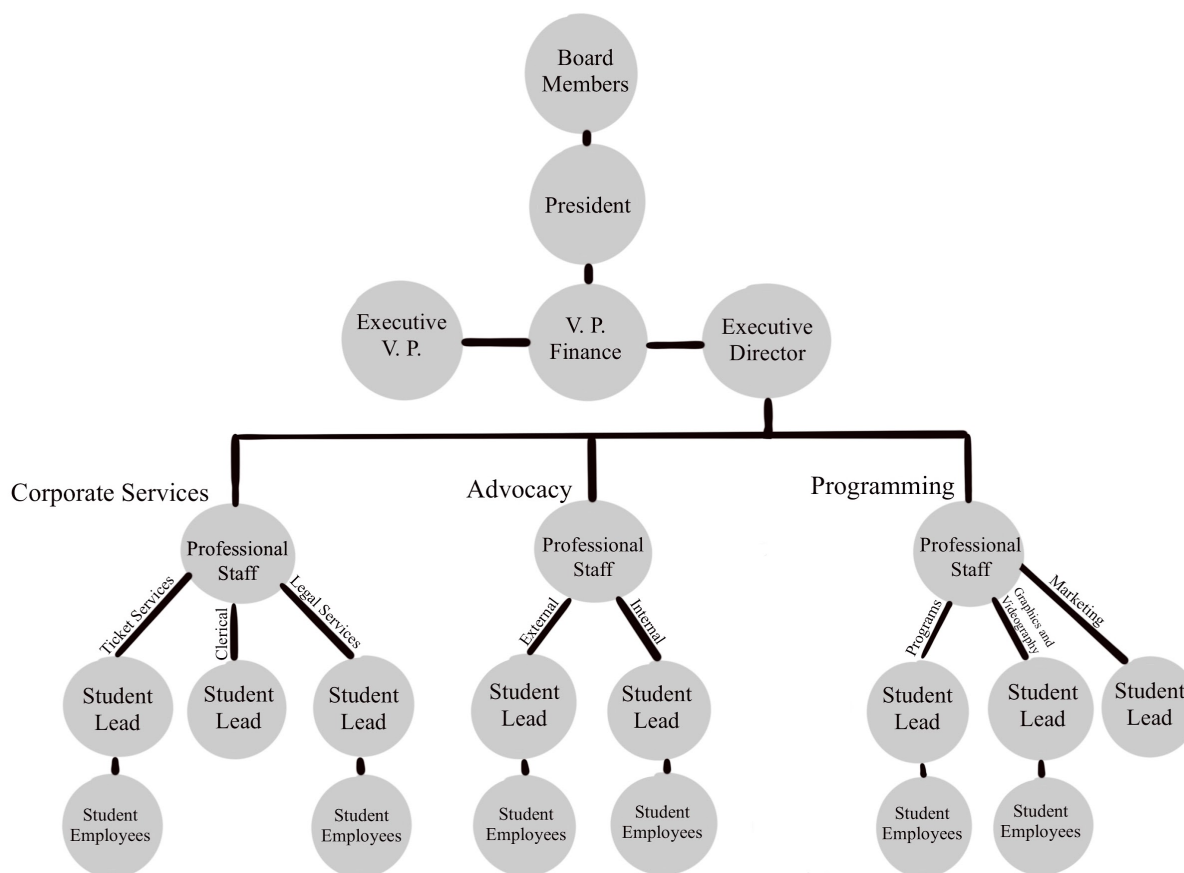


Figure 3

Associated Students Collective's Organizational Structure.

Positionality of the Researcher

I was a student employee at ASC for the entirety of my undergraduate degree. I held three different positions during the four years, all within the advocacy department. I campaigned for executive vice president at the end of my first year and president at the end of my third year, but I was not elected for either position. During my time with ASC, I was able to observe and interact within the organization as an inside member. Each year I gained valuable insight as to tensions that could arise during each executive term, but these tensions varied based on the elected executives. I created lasting friendships and professional relationships throughout these four years.

I ended my employment at ASC a month after I graduated. ASC does not employ students for long after their graduation as their goal is to represent and develop current WCC students and I needed to move out of the state to pursue my master's degree. Having worked for the organization for four years, I maintained access to the organization through professional relationships with professional staff members at ASC.

This continuing connection provided access for this study and my experience fostered rapport during interviews and focus groups. Furthermore, my knowledge of the organization aided in contextualizing answers from participants. My previous experience within ASC provided a unique opportunity for reflection in this study. My position as a previous employee allowed me to have contextual information as an insider, but remain neutral as a current outsider. The combination of personal introspection and participants' stories enriched the data through supporting opportunities for deep contextualization. My four years of experience within the organization allowed me to draw parallels from previous years to the stories of tension that participants shared from this current term, further providing potential for empirical significance. As a masters student in relational and organizational communication, I have had research experience and training interviewing recent alumni and current students at Colorado State University which helped me maintain the proper distance to explore the organizing process from a critical and analytical lens.

Participants

All professional staff, executive members, and student leads were recruited for interviews through email communication. Of fifteen potential participants, twelve organizational members were interviewed: the three executive members, the four professional staff members, and five student leads—two from the programming department, one from the advocacy department, and

two from the corporate services department. Additionally, a focus group was conducted during the programming department's student staff meeting. There were two student leads present within the focus group, one of which was interviewed, and six student staff (n = 8).

Interview Participants

Interview requests were sent to all executive members, professional staff members, and student leads. Out of sixteen requests, twelve participants responded and scheduled an interview. These groupings were decided based on the organizational structure (see Figure 1). The focus was placed on organizational leaders (i.e. the executive members and executive director) and their interactions with student staff, professional staff, and student leads in order to answer the research questions about tension-centered leadership.

ASC's executive members (i.e. President, Executive Vice President, and Vice President of Finance) are elected by WCC students and the Executive Director is hired by a committee of ASC and WCC administration representatives. The executive director is placed in line with the vice president and executive vice president because of their dual role of advising the executive members and reporting to the president. The combination of the executive director and executive members is referred to as the executive team. Due to these processes and their position within the organizational structure, the executive team serves as the leaders within ASC.

Student leads were included in the interview portion as they interact at an increased level with the executive team. Each of the programming leads are required to get approval for any programming, marketing, graphic, and videography work before it is released to the WCC student population. These leads also seek input throughout the planning and creation process for each sub-department, further fostering deep lines of communication between them and the executive team. The advocacy leads work directly with the executive team to determine courses

of action for advocacy related to WCC student needs and ASC's organizational needs. The internal advocacy lead also manages representation at the campus level and reports committee meeting discussions to the executive team. Lastly, corporate service leads also communicate with the executive team often as they either coordinate goals for their individual departments or help support the functioning of the Board of Directors. The depth of interactions between these department leads and the executive team provided a substantial basis for identifying tension formation and management in regards to servant leadership.

Focus Group Participants

Due to the current pandemic and WCC's status as fully virtual, one focus group with the programming student staff was conducted. Additionally, I focused on this department as they interact with each of the executive members often. Each subsection of programming (programs, graphic design and videography, and marketing) requires executive approval on their work before it can be released to the larger WCC population. Furthermore, programmers must work with the vice president of finance to budget their events. They also often involve the executive vice president in designing the executive members' roles during the events. The communication between the programming department and the executive team is also strong due to the department's role in fulfilling organizational goals related to outreach, student programs, and reputation. The stories collected from this focus group enriched and provided context for the data collected from the interviews.

Data Collection

A combination of interviews and focus group methods were used to collect data. These two research methods for data collection informed each other and allowed for tensions and tension management strategies regarding servant leadership within the organization to emerge.

Interviews revealed individual perceptions of tensions and their management strategies, while the focus group utilized collective sensemaking to identify tension within the department's interaction with the executive team and professional staff. This research design revealed both individual and collective tensions within the organization. Interviews occurred between two-and-a-half-month period during the end of the fall semester and winter break. The focus group occurred in the middle of this period after most interviews had occurred. This time period was decided as ASC's leadership and student employees had been working together for approximately six months which is half of their term. The focus group was conducted during the later half of the interview timeline in order to allow contextual information provided by interview data to guide the conversation within the focus group.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the executive team, student leads, and professional staff (see Table 2 for a list and Table 3 for a list of pseudonyms). Interviews ranged from thirty minutes to eighty-nine minutes with the average being approximately fifty-one minutes. Semi-structured interviews allowed for the researcher to focus on a flexible line of questioning while maintaining a conversational tone with the participant (Croucher & Cronn-Mills, 2015). Utilizing a semi-structured interview simultaneously supported rapport building and probing deeper into participants' individual stories to reveal tension. Instead of responding to a strict line of questioning, the participants had a role in co-constructing the interview process so that it best fostered an environment in which they could openly share their experiences (Croucher & Cronn-Mills, 2015).

In this format, participants were able to speak to their direct role in creating or managing tension within the organization which provided insight into individual tension creation and

management from those in leadership positions. Member checks took place through clarifying questions during interviews and through small conversations with the executive director about emerging themes. Interview questions (see Appendix A) were developed to promote discussion regarding servant leadership and its role in ASC to further inquire as to how expectations of leadership aid in shaping tension. The interviews took place over a phone call or video-conferencing software—most interviewees chose the video conferencing software—to accommodate for social distancing guidelines relating to COVID-19 and the distance between the researcher and participants.

Focus Group

The focus group was conducted with one team—programming student employees and leads (see Table 2 for a list). It lasted one hour and thirty-two minutes. This was chosen to reflect the level of interaction between student staff and the executive team. The student leads report directly to the executive team whereas the remaining student staff reports to the student lead; therefore, there are more one-on-one interactions between the executive team and student leads than between the executive team and student staff. When the student staff communicates directly with the executive team, they most likely communicate as a group or relay the interaction back to their department.

Focus groups allow for an in-depth understanding of communication phenomena as the group shares their various perspectives relating to the phenomena (Croucher & Cronn-Mills, 2015). They also provide a space for collective inquiry into the convergence of theory, research, and politics (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005). These focus groups followed the format of the interview portion by adopting an informal approach to allow participants to engage with each other and collectively build an understanding of the tension emergence and management within

their department. While there were questions to guide the conversation (see Appendix B), the participants led themselves in their collective sensemaking of discursive interactions relating to tension within ASC. Tensions discussed ranged from ones mentioned in previous interviews to difficulties the group mentioned. Additionally, the focus group provided more insight into tension within the organization as one participant's story would then spark discussions of that tension (ex: Passion versus Burnout tension) while the interview participants tended to focus on just one or two tensions. The focus group interview occurred over video-conferencing software to accommodate for social distancing guidelines relating to COVID-19, the distance between the researcher and participants, and to aid in understanding who is speaking.

Transcription

All interviews and focus groups were audio recorded and then transcribed for accuracy. A transcription service was used to help allow more time for data analysis. After the transcription service completed initial transcription, I reviewed the entirety of each transcript to check accuracy to promote a deeper understanding of the data (Tracy, 2018). Audio recordings were destroyed after transcription to protect participants' confidentiality and any identifiable information was replaced with pseudonyms.

Table 2*List of Interviewees and Focus Group Members.*

Interviews (n = 12)	Focus Group Members (n = 8)
Executive Director	Programs Student Employees (n = 4)
Corporate Services Professional Staff	Graphics and Videography Student Employees
Programming Professional Staff	(n =2)
Advocacy Professional Staff	Marketing Student Lead
President	Programming Student Lead
Executive Vice President	
Vice President of Finance	
Internal Advocacy Student Lead	
Programs Student Lead	
Graphics and Videography Student Lead	
Clerical Lead	
Legal Services Lead	

Table 3*List of Pseudonyms and General Area of Work.*

Professional Staff	Executive Team	Student Leads	Student Staff
Hernando	Olivia	Jorge	Isabella
Raúl	Elena	Diego	Carmen
Leonardo	Julieta	Margot	Emmanuel
Jane		Liliana	Valeria
		Emma	Mateo
		Renata	Santiago

Procedures

Data from the interviews and focus groups—a total of 184 transcript pages—were coded using the phronetic iterative approach (Tracy, 2018). This approach to research combines deductive and inductive reasoning by utilizing a combination of existing theory, guiding research questions, and emergent qualitative data (Tracy, 2018). The phronetic iterative approach encourages active reflection of previous experiences and past literature to sensitize the researcher to potential lenses for data interpretation (Tracy, 2018).

Primary-cycle coding is the first step in data analysis (Tracy, 2018). Primary-cycle coding focuses on relating segments of data to a code. Codes are composed of words or short phrases that can be identified within everyday language. Coding is the action of identifying similar codes within the data and creating thematic buckets in which the codes can be placed that relate to a type of phenomenon. During this first phase of coding, I looked for general themes that appeared in participants' stories relating to servant leadership, tension emergence, and

tension management. This coding began as soon as the first interview was conducted as it informed me on potential areas of focus for data collection (Tracy, 2018). Examples of codes that emerged were: displaying authenticity versus valuing people, sharing leadership versus stability, and developing people versus reward. The software MAXQDA was used to aid in this process as it is commonly used in qualitative studies for coding and providing thematic summaries of data (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2019).

Second-cycle coding was then conducted to relate the first set of codes to existing literature and the research questions (Tracy, 2018). In this phase of coding, I began to narrow the general themes relating to the six discursive enactments of servant leadership found within primary-cycle coding. A codebook was created throughout this process to aid in identifying these larger patterns within the data (see Appendix C). As I coded, I reflected both on my own experience within ASC as well as the literature I have reviewed on temporary organizing, leadership, and tension. This allowed for the coding to be directed by the combination of literature and my previous experience through providing lenses in which to review the data. After coding for examples of discursive enactments of servant leadership, I looked for tension within the quotes. This resulted in twenty-nine typed pages of quotes and potential tensions. From those twenty-nine pages, I began to narrow down to tensions that specifically related to discursive enactments and had multiple examples which resulted in fourteen sub-tensions. An analysis meeting helped surface tensions and broader themes. Those fourteen sub-tensions were then combined into five thematic tensions that are discussed in Chapter Four. Ultimately, this iterative process resulted in codes that are reflective of the current literature on temporary organizing, leadership, and tension while expanding to include previous experience with this unique organization.

Confidentiality and Ethical Measures

Specific measures were taken to protect the identity of participants while also recognizing their identities throughout this project. These precautions are reflected in the quotes, identifiers, and names used within Chapter Four. The university in which this organization is located has had previous breaches in confidentiality because of identifiable positions; therefore, I did not disclose participants' titles when quoting them. I also removed any identifiable information from quotes including titles, names, and identifiable projects.

Additionally, I wanted readers to be cognizant of the participants' racial and gender identities as they provide contextual information. Galvez and Muñoz (2020) spoke about how using pseudonyms in research can act as a form of erasure as it can remove the participants' identities through the guise of protection. However, ASC and its members could be easily identifiable without this layer of protection. With this in mind, I adopted a post-colonial lens when selecting pseudonyms. In order to challenge readers' unconscious biases and assumptions of identity, I had participants aid me in choosing names reflective of their racial identities. A few participants chose to use more common (or white-sounding) names. Most pseudonyms used reflect either Chicano or Latinx identities.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The members of Associated Students Collective (ASC) consistently work through tensions related to servant leadership within the context of their temporary organization. Through twelve interviews and one focus group of eight participants, participants shared their experiences within the organization and each provided a unique perspective on how servant leadership impacts the organization during a global pandemic. Five tensions relating to the discursive enactment of servant leadership in ASC emerged from the data (for a summary of tensions, see Table 5): (a) *perception versus practice*, that is, difference between how organizational leaders view that it should function and how it actually functions; (b) *investment versus reward*, which is the tension between resources dedicated to the discursive enactments of developing and valuing members and the amount of time the members can contribute to the organization, (c) *change versus consistency*, that is the tension between consistently changing goals every year due to the focus on sharing leadership with new members and the desire to have stable goals and practices; (d) *passion versus burnout*, the conflict between members' desire to provide the best service possible and burnout; and (e) *humbling versus "humbled"*, which is the contrast between servant leaderships' focus on service through humbling oneself and coming from a "humbled" background prior to the leadership role. In the following sections, these tensions are discussed along with examples of tension management. Table 4 presents each of the tensions with a brief description of each tension and the discursive enactments of servant leadership within the tension.

Table 4*Tensions within the Discursive Enactments of Servant Leadership.*

Tension	Explanation of the Tension	Reflected Enactment(s)
Perception vs. Practice	How organizational leaders expect the organization to function versus how it actually functions.	Valuing Others Sharing Leadership Providing Leadership Displaying Authenticity Building Community
Investment vs. Reward	Resources dedicated to developing and valuing members versus the amount they can contribute to the organization	Valuing People Developing People Building Community
Change vs. Consistency	Ever-changing organizational culture and goals versus long-term planning	Building Community Sharing Leadership
Passion vs. Burnout	The desire for high achievement due to deep care for the work versus detrimental impacts on mental health	Valuing People Building Community
Humbling vs. “Humbled”	Are the leaders humbling themselves or are they already humbled due to their life experiences?	Providing Leadership

Perception versus Practice

ASC is a unique organization given their temporary nature and dedication to servant leadership. This often results in expectations regarding how the organization *should* function; however, the data demonstrated that the perception as to how the organization should function does not always match how the organization does function. The disconnect between perceived functioning and the practiced reality appeared in (a) organizational structure, (b) problem management, (c) shared responsibility, and (d) connecting interpersonally.

Organizational Structure

The first example of the *practice versus perception* tension can be explored in the difference between the organization's hierarchical chart and the view of leadership within the organization. ASC's organizational chart demonstrates a vertically-oriented hierarchy with the Board of Directors and President as the most senior-ranking members. While this is how the organization is perceived to function, the reality and practice within the organization is a more lateral functioning. Rather than the Board of Directors and President being viewed as the sole leaders within the organization, everyone down to the student employees is viewed as a leader. For example, Raúl shared how the Executive Director refers to the President as "boss" and the President refers to the Executive Director "boss." The organizational structure, although seemingly hierarchical, functions laterally. Similarly, Jorge, a student manager, shared his experience with the hierarchical functioning of the organization:

I would say most of the time, it's flat. I just think the circumstances or the best way to disseminate information sometimes is you have to have a meeting with all the managers. That's going to introduce a little hierarchy. But for the most part, they try to stay away from that... But there's no division. There's no problem with somebody who we're managing going to the top level, whoever that may be, whether it's [the President or Executive Director], to go ask for help or advice. I think that's where it's flat. It's very open communication in that regard.

Rather than having a strict ladder of hierarchy that members have to follow as the organizational chart would suggest, ASC's practice is to create open lines of communication among the

members. Furthermore, the language of being “student leaders” in comparison to the other students at WCC allows the organizational members, no matter what role level, to perceive themselves as leaders. This will continue to appear in the quotes throughout this section as the members perceive themselves as *being led* while also *leading others*.

Responding to Mistakes

Another example of the *perception versus practice* tension appears in how the organization approaches mistakes or problems. Based on the discursive enactments of servant leadership, the organization should openly discuss mistakes in order to *display authenticity* (McGee-Cooper & Looper, 2001). Doing so helps the leaders within the organization shirk the image of perfection that can make leadership seem unattainable to others. Despite this expectation, the *valuing people* enactment tends to override the desire to openly discuss mistakes. Multiple participants mentioned being “scared” to confess mistakes. For example, Margot shared “Sometimes though, I’m scared to tell... higher ups, ‘Oh, this didn’t work out.’” Another student lead, Jorge, detailed his own experience with this tension by describing a mistake he made within the first few months of his employment:

I think it inspires that because everybody is doing good, and you don't really see it when people mess up per se because of that servant leadership. In servant leadership, you don't go out and bash somebody when they mess up. Normally, you'd bring them off to the side, and you'd talk to them in private. But that also causes for other people not to see when others mess up. Per se myself, I come in, and it's my first month. And I have not seen anybody get even reprimanded or even say anything to them. As far as I know, there might have been many, many things that happened in that first month that I was in, but I never heard about it. For that reason, it's like, “Oh, nobody else messes up. Everybody is perfect here.” So it makes me feel like, “Oh, damn. I messed up already.” I don't want to say it was a huge mess-up, but it was fairly big.

Jorge was hesitant to claim his mistake because he thought that other organizational members did not make mistakes. However, that was not the case as Jorge soon learned. In reality, members’ mistakes are discussed in one-on-one meetings with a professional staff member. They choose to

discuss mistakes in a private manner to protect organizational members from further criticism, demonstrating the discursive enactment of *valuing people* which prioritizes doing no harm (Greenleaf, 1998). Yet, this directly interferes with *displaying authenticity* as it does not help in creating a space in which members can address mistakes, learn, and disrupt the perception of a perfect leader.

Tension Management. While most of the organization handles mistakes by prioritizing valuing people over displaying authenticity, a professional staff member blends the two enactments. Jane, a member of the professional staff team, describes how they balance this tension with their own team:

But during the quarter, if there's something that I feel they need to know. Or for example, if something goes wrong, like in the way I'm processing something or somebody, the way they're communicating with me, I share it. I like to share it because you never know if somebody else will have that experience in how to handle it... So in my staff meetings, I would say, "Okay, this occurred, blah, blah, blah, blah. This is the way I handled it. This is the way I should have handled it. This is a better way to handle it," things like that. Because I feel any experience you have, you share it, especially within our field. So they're working, they're assisting me, I'm assisting them. You share things. And so, if something happens and I notice it's always taken very well. Or even if say [a student staff member] did something and, oh, well, maybe it should have been done differently, we discuss that too together as a group... We walk through it, so we're not putting the person on blast or whatever. We've had the conversation already but it's a teaching moment. I always say, okay, this is a teaching moment.

Jane does a great job of managing this tension in a *more-than* space. She takes mistakes and discusses them with her team, rather than one-on-one, as "learning moments." By framing it as a "learning moment" rather than a mistake, Jane protects her team members from criticism and creates a space in which the team can co-construct solutions. By creating this space, Jane pulls on the discursive enactment of *sharing leadership* and chooses to share contextual details so that the team can make informed decisions about arising issues. However, one conflict tends to occur across departments and that is the division of responsibility in achieving shared goals.

Responsibility

The *perception versus practice* tension also appears in how expectations and organizational goals are communicated among members through the process of sharing leadership. This can lead to tension within the organization as new members are still learning how the organization functions and do not comprehend the work needed to accomplish said goals. This tension is further exacerbated when work is not appropriately divided amongst the varying levels of leadership to meet these expectations. The perception is that in discursively sharing leadership, the responsibilities should also be shared to achieve the goals that were co-constructively set. However, this is not the practice. Hernando explained some of the difficulties his team experienced when sharing leadership:

For example, my staff would be like, “All right, well, what does the board want? What do the execs want?” And then they would provide those ideas, but there would be no follow up... I felt like sometimes my team didn't know where they stood, they felt like, “All right, here are the ideas and we're just going to make it happen.” And so it felt like a lot of the burden, a lot of the weight was being put on us. And it was just kind of like, “Okay.” And then there wasn't moving the ball forward, everyone together, right? It was a lot of my team members, I think, establishing communication.

Hernando expressed the frustration his department feels when the leadership team sets goals and expectations for the organization, but does not help in sharing the work needed to achieve said goals. This results in tension between members as they are expected to share the decision-making power—as it is a discursive enactment of servant leadership—yet there is no follow-through from members in higher leadership positions.

Liliana, a student manager, also detailed her difficulty sharing responsibilities with another member from the leadership team:

I think that's something I want to say does occur just because I know [an executive member] and she and I worked previously together in a team as well. So her moving up into her executive role was, I guess an easy transition, but yeah, when it comes to [position] wise, I also don't want to overstep and just assign. We do have

[positions] we need to fill. Sometimes the board of directors aren't always in constant communication with me since they are in communication with her. And I don't want to overstep her... I don't know, "hey, I need these [positions] filled. Can you talk to the board right away." Since it is urgent at times to fill these [positions] ... Even though we do have constant communication, it is a little hard to fill these [positions]. I guess the sense of overstepping her is something I'm kind of scared of doing. So I kind of tiptoe around that or trying not to overstep her. But I think that would be something that does happen every now and then between us too.

Liliana's quote also emphasized how members do not want to be perceived as overstepping their roles. Yet roles and responsibilities within the organization oftentimes overlap and collaboration is discursively encouraged through the enactment of *sharing leadership*, which makes it difficult to delineate who should be responsible for a task. This tension between sharing leadership and sharing responsibility becomes a constant occurrence as the organization gains new leadership every year.

Tension Management. Student members who have been with the organization for longer periods of time due to their non-elected positions have learned how to negotiate the tension between sharing leadership and sharing responsibility. Margot, a student manager, described her experience with high expectations from new members in the organization and how she chose to handle the tension:

They were all new, they had no clue what ASC was. Only two of them had worked past as board members, so they kind of knew what to expect. They knew how programming worked and unrealistic versus realistic expectations, but then it kind of grew and then more people had more opinions to say without knowing that transition that you get during summer leading into it... The board, they always want these big events and programs, and stuff, but then you're like, okay, but you need to think of the budget, you need to think of how to plan it, who are you going to have, people power, and all that stuff. So, that's been something that, and I always just have to reiterate every year, but when people who come from the outside that just don't understand and they just kind of, not demand, but they just want different things... That's when you're like, I want to give you advice, I want to give you something to run with, but I understand you have your own way of running it, so take it as you will, instead of just being like, we need to have late events because this, this, and that, and no background. That's when I'm like, okay, lead with love.

Having been in the organization for a longer period of time, Margot has been able to develop a conceptualization for realistic goals and responsibilities. She understands when new members approach with lofty goals, but she negotiates these goals and responsibilities with them by providing them with more detailed information. A discursive component of *sharing leadership* is to provide members with enough contextual evidence to be able to make informed decisions and Margot employs this tactic when negotiating expectations from other leaders. Rather than choosing to share one aspect over another in the decision-making process, she encourages other leaders to communicate those expectations *and* take responsibility for acting upon them; therefore, she utilizes the *both-and* management strategy.

Connecting During COVID-19

The last example of the *perception versus practice* tension appears in how the organization communicates value to their members. Valuing people is a discursive enactment of servant leadership. It requires that the leader does not make decisions that intentionally or unintentionally harm anyone. ASC has multiple ways in which they demonstrate their value for their members including prioritizing the creation of genuine relationships between members. This has been a continuing practice prior to this team and the perception is that these connections would be continuously fostered this year. However, this became difficult when the organization moved to a virtual format due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Olivia noted, “With the pandemic happening, it was also really hard to try to get to the office to connect like we used to.” Jane, a professional staff member, shared her experience in attempting to create the bonds that she used to have with the student staff:

And like say Production staff and Advocacy staff, I do the orientation for new people, but it's not like they will just reach out to me because they're going to reach out to [their leads]. But before, when in the office, I would just walk by and say, “Hi, how are you doing?” Graphics and I had a really good rapport, and even the

programming people. Well, everybody for that matter. But I don't have that luxury anymore. Everybody's working, and they're Zoom burnout. And I'm not going to contribute to a Zoom burnout.

The fear of contributing to Zoom burnout has left members unsure about connecting with members outside of their department. Prior to the pandemic, it had been as easy as walking by and saying “hi” as Jane describes. Now, the members fear harming the others by adding to their Zoom calendars when they wish to connect. The expectation of creating deep interpersonal bonds among organizational members has been replaced by the practice of avoiding adding to others’ calendars to help reduce an overwhelming virtual meeting schedule.

Tension Management. To avoid adding to Zoom calendars, members have begun to develop spaces to connect outside of Zoom. Hernando described such spaces:

I want to make sure that I'm doing the best that I can to connect on a one on one basis with each of them. My one-on-ones, they're not on the calendar, they're really impromptu. They're really like, “Do you have a minute to talk, like a text and a phone call, or a FaceTime?” Usually, I try to stay away from Zoom unless I need to share a document or something. Just, Let's take a break from Zoom, we have each other's numbers, let's FaceTime. That's how my effort is put forth with them, and ensuring if I see that there's something wrong, or there's something not being completed, like checking in on them. I feel like I'm a broken record because I keep reinforcing, reemphasizing, “If you need anything, let me know. What do you need from me? How can I help you?”

Hernando reflects the thought of not wanting to contribute to the Zoom burnout, but he still emphasizes the need to connect with his team. To acknowledge both needs, he utilized a *more-than* approach by employing other communication software such as FaceTime and by not placing these connection-focused meetings on the calendar. By using these methods, he balances the two poles of valuing the mental well-being of his team and wishing to connect with them; therefore, he creates a new practice that helps meet the expectation the organization has for connection.

Investment versus Reward

In addition to *practice versus perception*, the members of ASC make decisions regarding investment in people and the potential organizational reward. However, the enactment of servant leadership leads to tension when weighing the *investment versus reward* in members.

Organizational reward is defined as the amount of time the students spend with the organization. Members begin to effectively contribute to organizational goals after their training is completed.

Oftentimes, organizational leaders use the discursive enactments of valuing people and developing members to guide their decision between the poles of this tension. The discursive enactment of valuing people centers around the servant leader acknowledges the value of others and actively makes decisions that will not knowingly hurt anyone, directly or indirectly (Greenleaf, 1998). While the discursive enactment of developing people is founded on the servant leader involving other organizational members in the decision-making process for the purpose of promoting the members' growth and development (McGee-Cooper & Looper, 2001; van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010). The age, previous experience of members, and the temporary nature of the organization often create questions surrounding the potential reward the organization can get from investing in these members. Through the interviews and focus group, this tension was found when discussing (a) budget, (b) imposter phenomenon experiences, and (c) selecting new members.

Budget

The first example of this tension can be viewed in how ASC responded to budgetary restrictions. The COVID-19 pandemic has created budgetary shortfalls in the world of higher education. Inside Higher Ed reported that most institutions saw at least \$2 million in unanticipated costs by June 2020 resulting in furloughs and layoffs (Lederman, 2020). ASC faced similar bleak outcomes as they planned for the 2020-21 budget cycle because their budget

is determined by student enrollment numbers, which also were predicted to fall in the 2020-21 academic year. Leonardo, a professional staff member, explained the budget difficulties experienced in the past year due to the COVID-19 pandemic:

And it puts pressure on our executive director to be very conservative with our finances to ensure that his job is looking out for the staff and to make sure no one gets laid off or fired. He wants to make sure that we're in a good place to not be able to do that to our students and to our staff. But with that is that agreement that we have to come to ensuring that we're going to have to take some cuts. That affects our programming. That affects a lot of the operations that we do. And it's that expectation of that pressure of students might come back for this money if this lawsuit happens in a couple years, whatever that might be. We might have to give it back. We want to be in a sound financial position to be able to give it back and not have to cut completely.

Facing budget cuts due to the potential loss of revenue, the organization had to make a difficult choice between investing in operations or their members. Raúl, another professional staff member, shared his perspective on the budgeting process, “With everything shut down, keeping our students employed was extremely important because we knew that they wouldn’t find employment anywhere else at that point in time.” Holding onto their focus on servant leadership and their discursive enactment of valuing people, the organization conceptualized their members and their salaries as *people* rather than budgetary line items. They chose to cut other aspects of the budget in order to not harm their organizational members through layoffs or salary reductions.

Tension Management. While a third of institutions chose their operations, ASC communicated their value of their members by choosing to avoid furloughs and layoffs (Lederman, 2020). Leonardo described their approach to budgeting for the 2020-21 fiscal year:

We actually were very conservative in our funding aspect, so the CSU or the California State University system had told everyone prepare for a possible 10 to 15% reduction in enrollment. The way we do our budget is ahead of the enrollment count, so if we do it wrong, we can be in the red and be in big trouble. Our director did more than that and I believe did 20%. I can't remember off the top of my head, but it was more than what they had recommended. We're actually in a good state

because enrollment numbers stayed okay. However, that can change next year, right? So, we've saved some money because we were very conservative with our funds. We didn't put them back in the programs. We're just kind of putting them in our reserves to make sure when we do the budget negotiations next year, we're able to bring back those programs or we have to just stay at the same level.

The organization took a *more-than* approach by choosing budget items such as programming and travel to reduce and by not considering their personnel's salaries as budget line items. They also choose to create a space in which they were extremely fiscally conservative when setting the budget so that they would not need to make cuts during the year. This helped them not fall into the dilemma that many organizations in higher education faced in the 2020-21 budgetary cycle.

Age and Imposter Phenomenon

Another instance of the *investment versus reward* tension appears in how ASC chooses to develop its members and how members respond. Organizational leadership, specifically professional staff members, provide multiple opportunities for professional development to their student employees. Most often, this takes the form of encouraging student members to participate in the decision-making process—a reflection of the developing members and sharing leadership enactments of servant leadership. However, participants shared their experience with the impostor phenomenon when given the opportunity. Carmen shares her thoughts during the focus group on being a part of the organization's decision making:

For me, in particular, because it's the way it works out is that I always want to be perceived as someone who has a lot of knowledge and a lot of, maybe not experience, but definitely experienced enough to keep up. And it's not a sense of imposter syndrome where I feel I don't belong, it's more how can I make it so that they know I belong and how can I carry myself with enough confidence so to not fake it till I make it, but to show them that I can do this. What is the best way I can carry myself? What are the best things I can do? I found out that all you really need to do is your work, to do it at the highest quality possible. And they'll respect you in that regard. But, for me, it's always just... It's like meeting a movie star. But all the coworkers I have are movie stars.

Impostor phenomenon is described as feelings of phoniness and anxiety coupled with a need for perfection (Clance & Imes, 1978; Lane, 2015). Carmen shared that she faced feelings of not being able to keep up with other organizational members. Additionally, her repeated emphasis of “best” reflects her need for perfection in her work so that she can prove to other organizational members that she is worthy of being there. This presents a dilemma when the staff of ASC attempts to develop these members by giving them decision-making power, yet the members attempt to shirk the opportunity.

Raúl, a professional staff member, reflects on how this tension appears when he attempts to provide development opportunities to the student leaders:

But you can't give 19, 20, 21, 22, 25 year old adolescents a two million dollar budget and the power to change all kinds of policy. Especially when the individual hasn't had a lot of power in their life. Hasn't been given these types of responsibilities, these kinds of budgetary problems... Culturally, our students come from humble backgrounds. We have all this money, and then to need to make a big money call is difficult for them. To make a small money call is difficult for them because they're not seeing things relative to scale... We have over two million dollars in our reserves. Alumni affairs came to ask for \$6000 for some pens. We got \$6000. Easy. But \$6000 to a student that's never seen \$6000 is a huge deal. So letting go of \$6000 to support graduates was really hard for them.

In addition to feelings related to the impostor phenomenon, the student members struggle with conceptualizing the scope of the decisions they are making within the organization, specifically in relation to the organization's budget. ASC's annual budget is between \$1-2 million and they often make contributions to other departments on campus to support the student population. As Raúl explains, the student members have difficulty understanding the scale of the requests in comparison to the budget due to their limited experience with large sums of money. With the students resistant to making decisions, it can be difficult for the professional staff to provide them with development opportunities as well as make it difficult for the organization to progress along its mission. The professional staff members cannot decide to make these decisions

themselves due to the adherence to servant leadership which emphasizes sharing leadership among members in order to help them develop. Therefore, although the professional staff members and older student members can create development opportunities, the new members are not always apt to take advantage of the opportunities. This can slow the overall production within the organization as the new members work to challenge their feelings of impostor phenomenon.

Tension Management. Despite the members' initial resistance to being given decision-making power, the students eventually develop management techniques that aid them in participating in the development opportunities. In the following quote, Isabella describes how she challenged her feelings related to the impostor phenomenon in response to Carmen's story:

I just felt like everyone's so much older and more experienced just because I'm a freshman. I just felt like the baby. And so, I had to get used to, this is my team. They value my opinions too. So, I had to learn how to open up and get past that. And it was, I remember Shelby who just graduated. She told me that when she started, she was a freshman too. And I was like, that's so cool. So, you've been here all four years. I want to be just like that... And so one of the first things that Hernando told me for my evaluation was that I should speak up more because he liked my ideas and I was like, "That's great. I really should speak up more." So, I had to get used to being a part of a team... I'm the newbie, the baby and things are much better now. I love my team, but it was very weird.

Isabella reflects on her growth in the department and shares that the combination of advice and feedback aided her in overcoming her resistance to participating in decision making. She maintains her feelings of inexperience while also acknowledging and accepting the opportunities for development after receiving positive feedback from professional staff members. Other organizational members, such as Shelby and Hernando, who have more experience with discursively performing servant leadership choose to enact the leadership to help newer members manage this tension. This *both-and* management approach allows for the members to benefit from development opportunities while being cognizant of their feelings and growth.

Selecting New Members

In addition to having student members take some time to grow accustomed to being involved in the decision-making process, ASC does not experience as much benefit from the development of its members as other non-temporary organizations. Student members are normally with the organization for one to five years. Members who stay for multiple years change positions to accommodate their growth which in turn requires new development. Hernando, a professional staff member, described the difficulty associated with developing members and the consistent change every year:

It's the bringing in of new people. I feel by the time we've come to a consensus as [to] how we're going to move the ball forward, it's like December or January. Because it's not really a year, it's really like nine months. Summer, the board is not working. I mean, I think this year, the summer has... It was shorter and they've had more trainings. We've been trying to be more intentional about starting earlier.

Hernando described ASC's attempts to maximize the time with its members before they leave the organization. To accomplish this, they have started training the new team (particularly the executive team and board of directors) while the previous team is in office. They also begin encouraging the members to engage in the decision-making process during the summer, rather than starting when the fall semester begins. Despite these attempts, the student members do not begin feeling efficient in this decision-making process until half of their term is over. When asked about this phenomenon, Raúl—another professional staff member—stated, “I hate it. By the time they get good at what they’re doing, they have to pack up.” The organization experiences repeated frustration around the energy necessary to develop the members and the decreased time the members spend developing the organization in return.

Elena, an executive team member, explored this tension from the perspective of a new member:

So being that we have to do this for a year, it's kind of like having to create a whole new roadmap, if that makes sense, like scratch out kind of the plan that we have on the path. But keeping it going for the year, employees we have to learn the ropes, we have to learn the background knowledge behind our roles and that alone, it takes a minute especially since you have to adapt it to the pandemic, you have to learn it and then you also have to find a way to implement it and work with it virtually but also you have to change your old plans kind of that you had to a year and it's a challenge, I think that's basically what I would say.

As Elena described, new members struggle with this tension as well while recognizing the time it takes to “learn the ropes” before they can begin acting on their goals. With the added context of the pandemic and being virtual, members are also adjusting to other changes within their lives while needing to adapt the form in which they learn about ASC.

Tension Management. This difficulty also extends to the non-elected student members. Emma, a student manager, described how she makes decisions when attempting to balance the poles within this tension through her hiring choices:

It's frustrating at times, but I don't know. I don't think I particularly feel any way towards it. Most of the time. Like there's going to be new people and I have to figure that out. There's a big part of my job is figuring out which [students] I'm going to choose. And so I had to kind of choose between some lower level designers that might stick with us for longer or a designer that was really, really good, but it's only going to be here for like half a year... I try and choose the higher level [experience], just because I think that at this time with me only being in ASC for really like a year and a half I want someone who I can really rely on and who I don't need to train a ton since we're online.

Emma presents the dilemma as she can hire someone with less experience who will be with the organization longer, but spend more time training them or hire someone with more experience who will be able to get to work immediately, but have them leave within the year. She manages the tension between member development and reward with an *either-or* approach, oftentimes choosing to hire the student with more experience who will require less training.

Change versus Consistency

The third tension, *change versus consistency*, appears through ASC's temporary nature as the goals and culture of the organization is changing from year to year and this is further

exacerbated by the organization's dedication to sharing leadership, a core discursive enactment of servant leadership. In this enactment, the servant leader recognizes their followers' autonomy and ability to make decisions when provided with enough context (Greenleaf, 2002). They thoughtfully craft questions and opportunities for their followers to participate in decision-making. This presents paradoxes when considering the consistent turnover of student leaders and their role in the decision-making process.

Hernando, a member of the professional staff team, detailed his frustrations with the temporary nature and how it impacts the organization's strategic goals:

In general, I think difficulties, it's always the turnover, the yearly turnover. In a regular organization you have like a five year plan. And here, it's changing every year. Even if we try to steer it in a certain direction, things might get switched over. So just not wanting to establish certain traditions or events or programs, but the board and the new team having new ideas, which is great, and I love it, but it kind of provides a little bit of an inconsistency because it's a constant turnover. That's always difficult, I think, in any student government.

Hernando emphasized the inconsistency of goals within the organization and how it can make creating long-term plans difficult. While the professional members who stay for longer periods of time in the organization can influence the goals of the organization, they choose to share that decision-making ability with the students. This results in the goals of the organization changing yearly as new members join and older members leave due to term limits or graduation

In addition to the inconsistency with goals, the organization experiences challenges with developing expectations of new members and their contributions to the overall culture of the organization. Jorge, a student manager, explained his perspective on the consistent turnover within the organization:

I think the one-year term makes it worse because I feel like people don't carry the experience with this one person. It's like, 'Oh. Well, how's this person going to respond when I mess up?' We don't exactly get to know everybody completely. We don't know their full leadership styles... And I think a huge part of it goes to the pro staff because they're here for longer. Some of the students who do go into leadership

positions are here for a while. But most of them, I would say, come in the year before, and then they go to the leadership position. Because of that, it makes it a little bit more difficult to try and get rid of this like, 'Oh, you should be comfortable to talk to me. I'm your leader.' And then, I dip out, and now somebody is your leader and you're supposed to feel comfortable. It's like a cycle. Well, I understand why it is. We can't have one president for four years. I don't know if other schools do that, but I don't think that's how it's supposed to go. I think it's just a side effect of the system that we have.

In addition to not having stable goals, the organization experiences a constant shift in organizational culture due to the changes in student leaders. As Jorge explained, it can be difficult to anticipate the different culture in the organization from year to year as the executive team changes. Even if one executive member gets re-elected or elected into a different position, there are two new members who add a different dynamic to the organization.

Tension Management. This tension is contextualized by the temporary nature of ASC due to their election cycle. Leonardo, a professional staff member, explained how the election cycle impacts the goals of the organization:

So, there's certain projects that we have to continue and that's because the chancellor's office, or we get directives from the university president, or the higher-up administration that says we have to meet these obligations... So, student leaders might be like, 'You know what? That's not the year we have to do that, but however, there's a law that requires us to do it.' So, those projects will continue based on because we're mandated that we're required to, so that's not something we can change. It's other projects, whether it's having a concert every year, I'm going to just go that route because it's the most popular one. If you want to continue having that tradition of having a concert, or some student leaders might feel like you know what? We need to spend our money on scholarships or we need to give back to students instead of putting on a \$150,000 to \$300,000 concert. They might feel like that's the direction and so staff might get discouraged and be like, 'No, that's always been our tradition.' But again, we serve at that pleasure of the board and the president, and we have to be able to compromise on the decisions and let them know this is what we've done in the past, but again, it's subject to their approval.

As Leonardo described, the organization chooses an *either-or* management strategy because they choose to share the leadership of the organization with the newly elected student officials rather than determining set traditions and goals. The organization resists setting firm traditions and goals because their policy, which emphasizes the importance of *sharing leadership*, states that

yearly goals are set by the executive team and board of directors. As Hernando and Jorge state, this can create inconsistencies and difficulties with the culture and in planning long-term. Yet, there is nothing that can be done to fix this because the leadership changes yearly due to the election cycle. Despite the normal inconsistencies with goals that the organization faces due to the ever-changing cohort of student leaders, the organization also battles too much consistency when working with professional staff members.

Attempting Change

The amount of change within the organization can make members cling to stable practices, which can cause tension as the organization attempts to share leadership between the parent organization (professional staff) and the innovative new members who form the temporary organization. The professional staff members' time within ASC ranges from three to thirty-one years, the average being over five-and-a-half years (when excluding the outlier of 31 years). The large range of experience leads to differing opinions on change, despite the organization's temporary nature. Opposition to change can make it difficult for the organization to adapt. Yet, the organization requires buy-in from members as a component of the foundational enactment of *sharing leadership* and does not choose to dismiss opposition to change. For example, Leonardo described his difficulty in trying to share leadership while competing against lack of buy-in from certain members:

We have to be able to adapt to student leaders that want to do more, that want to change the structure. However, when you have old traditions, or you have traditions that have been a little bit more updated even from what technology you use, we're trying to make sure that we're working as fast as we can. That creates tension when you're trying to make decisions. So, now I serve [within the leadership team]. That still doesn't mean I get pushback from staff members who don't want to change the status quo or change certain things because that's the way they've always done it. That creates tension. It creates a little bit of difficulty on trying to get things completed and oftentimes it can lead to it almost being like a personal attack or a

personal thing on that person. And when it's definitely not personal at all, it's just a matter of making sure we're using our resources to the best of our advantage.

Leonardo identified the difficulties of being in a temporary organization housed within a parent system. The consistent professional staff (parent system) provide access to historical significance and traditions while the new student employees supply new ideas and goals for the organization.

Another reflection on this tension was shared by Raúl:

[There] is a person that's been in the role longer than I was a student on campus. So there's a sense of ownership there and I made the mistake of coming in and trying to alter it, not respecting that ownership, not respecting that time.

The organization prioritizes servant leadership and sharing the decision-making, which can make it difficult to reconcile traditions with new ideas. Members feel “ownership” of their ideas, especially when they have had time to develop and implement them. Therefore, an attempt to change these practices can promote tension emergence between the parent organization (professional staff members) who has the time to develop practices and the temporary organization (student staff members) who initiate change.

Considering the organization prioritizes *sharing leadership* between its members (therefore requiring member buy-in regarding the proposed change), proponents of the change must find a way to persuade other members to join their side. Most often, members rely on another discursive enactment of servant leadership to accomplish this: *building community*. In this enactment, the servant leader identifies the benefits of a team working towards a common goal and utilizes persuasion, rather than coercion, to draw organizational members into the team mindset. Leonardo, having recently graduated, explained how he navigated the tension between the professional staff's traditions and the students' new ideas through the use of *building community*:

So, in this manner, when I'm proposing new changes from the norm that's been done for so long, I justify it. And that allows the person who has been comfortable with these types of traditions to be more open about it, to see that there's

positiveness to it, that there's benefits behind these types of changes. When people don't bring about any justification at all, obviously it's going to push some resistance on that on individuals, but change is needed to grow. Especially, again, we're evolving very rapidly as a society, so people who are unwilling to change oftentimes get left behind or that creates tension among staff members because it's like, "Well, no, I don't agree." But we have to be able to come to that compromise, because even there's certain things that I will advocate for that will never get done. But I have to be willing to accept the outcome.

In this quote, Leonardo reveals how he navigates the tension caused by sharing leadership between the professional staff who provide structure and the new student leaders who provide innovation. Justifying the reason for the change helps Leonardo persuade, rather than coerce, members of the organization to pursue the desired change. This discursive choice of persuasion is linked to the *building community* enactment as he persuades organizational members to join the change community. This also aids in reducing any ill-will towards the change as members become invested through the justification and persuasion. By creating space for cooperation and compromise, Leonardo utilizes a *both-and* tension management approach as he persuades opposing members to lean-in to the change while maintaining their dedication to the historical structure.

Passion versus Burnout

The fourth tension, *passion versus burnout*, was demonstrated when members of ASC discussed their passion for their work and serving others while acknowledging how that related to high expectations for themselves that led to detrimental impacts on their mental health. Oftentimes, participants shared that they wanted to produce the best possible work for others or that they felt that they should be producing more to make the organization stand out. This passion and insistence on "more" led to adverse impacts on their own mental health, often referred to as "burnout." For example, Margot shared "I take all this on and I feel kind of burnt out, but I'm not going to let [a professional staff member] know." This was also reflected during

the focus group with the productions department as collective sensemaking led to a discussion of experienced burnout. Carmen detailed her struggle with burnout:

I was like, “I should do more.” And it was clearly not how it was supposed to go. Especially, considering that I hit burnout hard and fast, and I was just like, “I’ll power through it, burnout doesn’t exist.” It does. It hurts mentally. And so, when I finally talked to [the student manager and a professional staff member] and they were like, “Please take some time off, please.” I was like, “Okay, I’ll do that.” And I understood that. I realized I wasn’t doing everything as well as I could, because I wasn’t feeling correct about any of it... I just had to remember that as I have to do everything well, I can’t just half it, and if I do, I’m not going to feel great. No, one’s going to feel great. It’s going to feel real weird for everybody involved and you don’t want it to feel weird, but sometimes it’s what you tell yourself, because you feel like that’s your only option. So, in that regard, I now have a better idea of how I want to approach things.

Carmen’s quote demonstrates how her need to “do more” contributed to her encountering burnout. Her desire to value those around her and deliver quality work overrode her own self-care.

Emmanuel, another member of the productions department, also described his encounter with burnout:

Ever since we’ve been online, being creative, standing out, aside from all the other departments at [WCC], we had to stand out and I feel like that kind of impacted me a lot because obviously being part of productions, you have to make something cool to stand out, pop out and then other departments will like seeing like, “Oh, can you help?”... So it was during the summer. And I know after elections then I was okay. I’ll take a break and stuff like that. But that’s when the other departments [were] like, “Oh, help us, help us do this, do this.” And I’m like, “Okay.” Because I usually don’t turn down work. Because I feel like that’s just not me. Because I get it done and give it 100%... And then once when I finished everything, I was like, “Yeah, I need a break.” My creativity was exhausted. I literally couldn’t even think of anything else to make. And then I knew literally right after I finished doing those [projects], there was two weeks left until school started again. So, then we would have to get [a professional staff member] was telling me, “Okay, we’re going to make [back to school projects].” And I just stayed up until I was like, “Hey, I can’t, I’m going to just take these two weeks as a break.” Because, it’s very hard trying to be or standing out compared to every other department. And your creativity just goes downhill from there. Because you can still, I don’t know for me, but I’m not sure if it works for anyone else, but ever since we’ve been in the whole online, I’ve been programmed to, okay, we got to make something like, excuse my language, bad-ass. Something outstanding, something that catches everyone’s eyes. And then

I feel like that also has all this pressure. And, if you don't make something cool, well then you won't get enough traction and stuff like that.

Emmanuel mentioned that he gives his work one-hundred-percent of his effort and feels the pressure to create work that is exceptional. However, the consistent need to produce exceptional work and meet the demands of others had him experiencing burnout before the fall semester even began.

Both members expressed the inherent need to produce exceptional work and how that need eventually drove them to feel exhausted and incapable of producing at the same quantity and quality. The first discursive enactment within servant leadership is to communicate care for others. Emmanuel and Carmen are making the discursive choice to produce high quality work over the compressed timeline of the organization. However, the consistent production of high quality work in a short amount of time has contributed to their feelings of overwhelming exhaustion, forcing them to take time off from work to restore their energy. In this, they switch from valuing others to needing to value themselves. This promotes tension when considering the discursive enactment of *valuing people*, which prioritizes doing no harm to others (Greenleaf, 1998). While these members took time off to recharge, the organization either lost time towards their goals or other members were required to take on extra work to make-up for their recharging coworker.

Tension Management. Carmen and Emmanuel both describe their encounter with burnout due to their desire for perfection in their work. Both also detailed how they took time off from the organization to manage the circumstances related to caring deeply about their work. Olivia, a member of the executive team, shared how she communicates the necessity to take care of oneself while also valuing others:

Lead with a heart, but protect your heart at the same time. I feel like something like that is really important because you have to have a big heart to lead in these kinds

of positions. But you also have to remember to protect yourself and to not hurt yourself within the process or else you won't be able to help other people. If you can't take care of yourself, then you can't take care of others... I think that that's something that I really stand behind and I think is important. [You] can't fill up somebody else's cup if yours is empty. You gotta do what you gotta do to be able to lead in these kinds of positions. That definitely involves taking care of yourself.

Olivia continually emphasized the importance of balancing valuing the people the organization serves and valuing her own mental well-being. She is choosing to manage in a *both-and* space by emphasizing the importance of caring for oneself while caring for others. Carmen and Emmanuel's anecdotes demonstrate the difficulty of delivering high quality work when one's own self-love cup is empty.

Humbling versus “Humbled”

The last tension, *humbling versus “humbled,”* emerged as a response to how much of the literature on servant leadership centers around the concept that the leader humbles themselves to serve others (Greenleaf, 1977); however, the question arises about whether one is humbling themselves or staying humbled when individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds step into these leadership positions. WCC is a Hispanic Serving Institution with more than three quarters of the students receiving federal financial aid. Most of the students are local and choose to attend WCC so that they can stay close to home. Many of the student leaders who join ASC are members of these communities that have historically been put in subservient roles. Although just one participant mentioned this tension, it resonates with other literature that has noted the tension in the use of servant leadership with minoritized communities and presents a call for inclusive language surrounding this leadership conception (Graham, 2018).

Raúl, a professional staff member, pondered the implications associated with the discursive nature of servant leadership during his interview:

What does it mean to use the word servant leadership around people of color? And how is that different from servant leadership? That's not a conversation that I've

had with the staff, but it's definitely something that's been in my head lately because [of] the historical purposes of servant leadership. What does it mean to be a servant leader when you're already in a subservient mentality prior to your leadership role? Even after your leadership role, you still have that subservient mindset. Are you really being a servant leader? Are you really humbling yourself to lead or are you humble because you've been marginalized to the point where humility is built into your everyday life?

In the quote above, Raúl ponders over the development of the team and whether it is harmful to guide them under the tenets of servant leadership. As Raúl described, there is concern about the development of the student leaders as this discursive framework of leadership prioritizes serving others, but these students often come from humble backgrounds prior to their time with ASC. Rather than teaching the student leaders to humble themselves into a place of leadership, Raúl prioritizes “leading with love” as a recognition that these students are already humbled and might only need some direction as to why they are leading.

Raúl described how he choose to use “leading with love” as a framework for leadership and how that manages the discursive concerns surrounding servant leadership:

I'm learning to reframe servant leadership. It's really coming from a place of leading with love and the social change model more than anything right now. It's just because understanding the cultural implications to the word servant leadership is problematic. Especially for people that have been historically marginalized and forced into servitude. When I say servant leadership to a non-marginalized student, that means something very different than it does to a person of color.

Raúl approaches the tension with a *more-than* management approach. He is beginning to shirk the outdated language surrounding servant leadership—while still maintaining the underlying value of caring for others—and adopting a different model. The social change model theorizes a leader who is “able to effect positive change for the betterment of others, the community, and society,” specifically in relation to social justice and inclusivity (Higher Education Research Institute, 1996). By utilizing this model, Raúl maintained the core values of servant leadership (such as valuing others) while adding a focus on social justice and inclusivity that is mindful of the student leaders’ identities.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The research focus for this thesis project was tension emergence and management related to the discursive enactment of servant leadership within the context of temporary organizing. This case study explored accounts from a total of nineteen participants and their experience with tension within Associated Students Collective (ASC). Tensions centered around day-to-day organizing, investment in members, long-term planning, high achievement desires contributing to burnout, and socio-cultural implications of language used in servant leadership literature while tension management emerged as practices relating to the discursive enactments of servant leadership. Overall, the qualitative results reveal a potential view of leadership that is tension-centered and tension-filled. Additionally, the results suggest a nuanced relationship between temporary organizing and leadership. The following sections explore (a) larger interpretations of the data relating to a tension-centered approach to leadership and temporary organizing, (b) pragmatic implications of the data, (c) limitations of this study, and (d) recommendations for future research.

Contributions to a Tension-Centered Approach to Servant Leadership

This study began by asking (a) how do tensions emerge in the discursive enactment of servant leadership in the everyday organizing of ASC and (b) how do members address these tensions during their one-year term in ASC? The findings from these research questions contributes to existing research by theorizing a tension-centered view of leadership and by reconceptualizing servant leadership through discursive enactments.

The findings of this study affirm Putnam, Fairhurst, & Banghart's (2016) description of organizational tension as "opposing forces in complex organizational environments" as tensions

emerged in response to the changed environment and parallel to the discursive enactments of servant leadership (p. 66). The shared experiences of participants provide insight into just how complex this year's organizational environment was for them. With a global pandemic, working completely virtually, budget cuts, and new leadership, the members of ASC were functioning in a new environment that fostered tension emergence.

The discursive enactment of servant leadership is tension-filled. Tensions emerged parallel to communicated values of servant leadership. For example, tension emerged in reflection of the discursive enactment of servant leadership such as sharing leadership as this works to prevent the organization from creating long-term goals due to the organization gaining new members who contribute to the decision-making process. In some cases, discursive enactments would compete against each other in practice, which led to tension. For instance, valuing people and displaying authenticity compete with each other when members decide how to address mistakes. The valuing people enactment calls for not harming others while the displaying authenticity enactment requires transparency. Yet as members make mistakes, supervisors chose to protect them by discussing the mistakes in one-on-one meetings which disrupts the transparency. As Ashcraft and Tracy (2004) note, tension is always present as a natural component of organizing. In ASC, servant leadership is a core component in how members organize and communicate. Therefore, the discursive enactment of servant leadership is inherently tension-filled.

Tension is a natural part of everyday organizing; however, tension emergence changes when the "everyday" is disrupted. The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed organizations to consider alternative forms of organizing as the world shut down to slow the spread of the virus resulting in a new conceptualization of normal, everyday organizing. This has added new

complexity to understanding tension emergence and management. Associated Students Collective moved their operations entirely virtual like several other non-essential organizations. The move to virtual organizing combined with the consistent stress of living through a pandemic aided in the development of tension. While tensions experienced within ASC were present prior to the pandemic, most were not widely experienced until the organization was placed under stress. For example, the organization often chooses how to make budgetary allocations based on their core values. However, this year's budget cuts created due to enrollment loss made choosing between budgetary line items more difficult. Ultimately, the organization honored their value of people when making cuts and chose to cut programs and travel rather than salaries. This is one example of many that demonstrated how added stress to the organization ultimately cultivated tension emergence. This provides new insight into the relationship between widely experienced stress and tension emergence.

In addition to the discursive enactment of servant leadership being tension-filled, some discursive enactments provided guidance for members to engage in tension management. The discursive enactments of valuing people and building community appeared most often as tension management strategies. In the instance of budget negotiations due to budget cuts, the servant leaders chose to value its members and displayed it through their choice to not view organizational members as budgetary items. Building community was most often used to create a *both-and* space in tension negotiation. When tension emerged in relation to sharing leadership between the parent organization (professional staff) and the temporary organization (student staff), persuasion—a key component of the building community enactment—was utilized as a reframing tactic by organizational members to merge historical knowledge with innovative ideas. By building the space to be more inclusive of diverse opinions from both the professional and

student members, organizational members effectively used the *both-and* management strategy. This demonstrated that while the discursive enactments of servant leadership fostered tension emergence, they also provided guidance for tension management.

Members chose to use *both-and* and *more-than* tension management strategies the most. *Either-or* appeared as a management strategy only once in the data and that was due to policy restrictions and an adherence to the sharing leadership discursive enactment (see *Change versus Consistency* tension). Members utilized tension management strategies that acknowledged the interplay of discursive enactments and either found a way to blend two together or create a space that encouraged discussions of other enactments or values. Therefore, the discursive enactment of servant leadership by members of ASC served to foster tension emergence as enactments competed and provided guidance for tension management as they blended enactments together, making their discursive enactment of servant leadership tension-filled.

Contributions to Temporary Organizing

The qualitative findings of this study also demonstrated a nuanced view of temporary organizing and the communication of leadership. A parent organization is a permanent aspect that houses and provides structure to the temporary organization (Tornes & Kramer, 2015). Through the research process, it became clear that the parent organization was not necessarily an *organization*, but rather a collection of people. The professional staff of ASC function as the parent organization as they maintain the values and history of the organization and provide guidance to each year's team.

The parent organization is responsible for instilling the values of servant leadership within the student members just as it is vital for the student members (or the temporary organization) to understand the values in order to create goals and make decisions that align with

the communicated values. While a mutual understanding of values between these two organizational components helps move the organization forward in goal achievement, tension can also appear between the parent organization and the temporary organization as historical practices battle against innovation. This was illustrated in the *change versus consistency* tension when members of the parent organization were resistant to change proposed by temporary organization members. Furthermore, as Tornes and Kramer (2015) and Bechky (2006) noted, members of the temporary organization can have feelings of uncertainty as they negotiate their roles and expectations. As noted in the *perception versus practice* and *change versus consistency*, members experienced uncertainty in their leadership roles and regarding the culture of the organization. This affirms and adds to the literature that indicates temporary organizing can lead to feelings ambiguity and uncertainty from members in a temporary organization.

Pragmatic Implications

ASC presents a unique context for this case study as they combine servant leadership and temporary organizing. Additionally, the timeline of this project aligned with the global COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the unique context of this study, there are broad implications that can be garnered from the results regarding the relationship of leadership and tension.

The results from this study contributes to a clearer understanding of the relationship between leadership and tension. The tensions discussed in this paper emerged through expectations related to communicated values from leadership while these values also provided guidance for tension management. Therefore, the discursive enactment of leadership has inherent tensions. These results should be taken into account when considering specific leadership enactments and the values that are discursively built into them as they can provide insight into the tensions that may emerge within the organization.

There are a few actionable suggestions for ASC and similar organizations to help manage tensions related to the enactment of servant leadership. One of the tensions discussed in Chapter Four was *perception versus practice*. In this tension, the organizational chart was not reflective of how leadership is conceptualized. ASC and other laterally organized organizations should consider alternative organizational structures to the standard vertically-integrated model such as Helgensen's (1995) *web of inclusion* which emphasizes "multiplicitous, open, and diffuse" lines of communication among members (p. 10). Additionally, the results indicated that there was a disconnect between how mistakes are managed within the organization. While members were scared of consequences due to not witnessing other organizational member's make mistakes, one department managed this sub-tension by treating mistakes as "learning moments." Organizations should widely accept this practice and begin to reframe mistakes as "learning moments" with their teams.

The results also indicated that tension can emerge from sharing leadership within the organization, specifically when (a) members do not share responsibility to enact a decision after sharing the decision making and (b) the parent organization is resistant to change (as seen in the *change versus consistency* tension). ASC and other organizations that emphasize sharing leadership among members should generate guidelines for communication and decision-making within their organizations. These guidelines should provide direction for how responsibility should be shared between departments after collective decision-making. In addition to these guidelines, the organization should create a training for all members on how to negotiate change when resistance arises. This training should emphasize persuasion over coercion in accordance with the *building community* enactment of servant leadership.

Lastly, the *passion versus burnout* raises concerns for the mental health of organizational members in high-achieving organizations. Many participants of this study indicated that they had feelings of burnout within the first semester of their term due to the high expectations they placed on themselves. Organizations should create systems to recognize burnout within its members and implement downtime. This downtime could look like time-off or a few low-stakes projects after a demanding project. Additionally, the organizations could implement an anonymous feedback system in which members could share concerns of burnout for themselves or their coworkers. Overall, these changes should aid in helping servant leaders manage tensions that emerge in their everyday organizing.

Limitations

Although this study provides insight into a new perspective of leadership and temporary organizing as well as practical suggestions for temporary organizing and servant leadership, there are several notable limitations. These limitations are centered on the generalizability of the results due to methodological choices and COVID-19 safety precautions.

The generalizability of the results is limited by the participant size and methodological choices of this study. A case-study approach was necessary to deeply explore tension emergence and management as it relates to the discursive enactment of leadership. However, while the participant size equated to almost half of the employees within the organization, the sample size does not provide adequate data to create assumptions regarding tension emergence within the day-to-day organizing of larger organizations. The participant responses and communicated experiences are unique to the context of servant leadership and temporary organizing during a global pandemic.

Furthermore, the methodological choices were constrained due to the timeline of the project and safety precautions related to COVID-19. It was not possible to conduct field research within the organization for the purpose of collecting more contextual information. Thus, the results provide a base in which future research can explore larger implications due to the nature of this case study. Therefore, it is beyond the scope of this study to provide overarching recommendations for temporary organizations.

Directions for Future Research

Further research is needed that explores tension-filled leadership as it relates to other enactments of leadership (e.g.: transformational leadership, change leadership). These studies should incorporate Putnam, Fairhurst, and Banghart's (2016) constitutive approach to tension as well as a combination of their and Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) tension management strategies to create the foundation for a tension-centered perspective. Following the example of this study, researchers can then explore tension-filled leadership by establishing the discursive values expressed within their chosen leadership enactment. This should aid in creating a holistic understanding of tension-centered and tension-filled leadership.

In addition to considerations of tension-filled leadership, scholars should interrogate the problematic framing of servant leadership. For instance, language surrounding servant leadership needs to be problematized, just as participants and Graham (2018) suggested. While the discursive enactments are relevant to leading and help create a set of values that guide organizations, the language and underlying values within this enactment of leadership is problematic for minoritized communities. Participants acknowledged that the enactment of servant leadership focuses on humbling oneself to lead; however, this is experienced differently for organizational members from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Rather than learning to

humble themselves, organizational members are continuing their “humbled” nature due to their lived experiences. This also creates an aversion to taking leadership roles or participating in the decision-making process. Participants shared experiences relating to impostor phenomenon as they were asked to make decisions or take on leadership roles. This further demonstrated that these members did not need to become humble to take on these responsibilities; instead, they needed to build confidence. Scholars need to recognize that servant leadership, among other widely known leadership enactments, were created by affluent white men (Wren, 1995). Therefore, it is important to consider the underlying values expressed by leadership enactments.

Additionally, future research regarding temporary organizing should account for the variance of the time-orientation within temporary organizations as well as explore a deeper understanding of parent organizations. Current literature has categorized short-term workgroups as temporary organizations; however, this study has explored how an organization can be temporary in nature as a result of term limits. Future research could explore this implication in relation to government positions with term limits as well as national associations with elected boards. Furthermore, more research is needed to establish the various forms of parent organizations. Within this study, the professional staff members provided the foundation for ASC as they were the parent organization through their sustainment of organizational values (i.e. servant leadership).

Conclusion

This project began with the goal to understand tension emergence and tension management within the temporary context of ASC. This study provided more than understanding of tension management and emergence. It envisioned leadership that is tension-centered and tension-filled and contributed more insight into temporary organizing. The results presented the

opportunity for future research into tension-centered organizing as it relates to leadership while begging for organizations to consider the implications of values expressed in their leadership enactments.

The shared experiences of ASC members provided insight into living and working during a global pandemic. They spoke to the difficulties of connecting and maintaining their mental health that millions, if not billions, of people are facing during this unrivaled and turbulent year. Despite this, these members have continued to navigate and negotiate emerging tensions within their organization in order to continue delivering their service to the community. It is my hope that future research can continue to explore the value and impact of leadership and tension within unique organizations.

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¹ The following journals had recent publications regarding tension: *Communication Monographs*, *Communication Quarterly*, *Communication Studies*, *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, *Management Communication Quarterly*, *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication*, *Southern Communication Journal*, *Western Journal of Communication*.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Please tell me the story of how you decided to join ASC.
 - a. Why did you apply for your position/run for office?
2. Please describe the first few months in ASC.
 - a. What was it like to learn your position?
 - b. What was it like to be a part of the organization during this time?
3. What has it been like to be in an organization that prioritizes servant leadership or “leading with a servant heart”?
 - a. How do you define servant leadership?
 - b. What expectations have been placed on you regarding this title?
 - c. What expectations have you had for your coworkers relating to this leadership style?
 - d. What conversations have there been surrounding servant leadership?
4. What difficulties or problems have you experienced in ASC?
 - a. Probe for internal tension (i.e. tension they notice within their position).
 - b. Probe for interpersonal tension.
 - c. Probe for tension with the leadership team/student employees.
5. Please describe the difficulties or problems encountered during your time at the organization.
 - a. When did it first appear?

- b. How did the problem develop? Probe for tension developmental aspects
(discourse, socio-historical, developmental actions, praxis, and presence of multiples)
 - c. Does the problem still exist?
- 6. How do you feel about these difficulties or problems?
 - a. Probe for Tracy (2004) perspectives on tension (complementary, contradiction, paradox/double bind)
- 7. How has this problem changed from its first appearance?
- 8. How have you or the leadership team worked to manage this problem?
 - a. Probe for specific details
 - b. Probe for management techniques (either-or, both-and, more-than)
- 9. How has the one-year appointment term factored into the management of this problem?
 - a. Probe for impacts of their own one-year term
 - b. Probe for impacts of their leadership's one-year term

Clearinghouse: Is there anything that we did not get to during this interview about tension or servant leadership that you would like to add? Do you have any suggestions for future servant leaders?

APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

1. Please tell me about your individual roles in the programming department?
2. Please describe the first few months in ASC.
 - a. What was it like to learn your position?
 - b. What was it like to be a part of the organization during this time?
3. What has it been like to produce programming or marketing?
 - a. Probe for intradepartmental tension.
 - b. Probe for tension with leadership team.
4. What expectations have been placed on you all to deliver programming this year?
 - a. Probe for impacts of one year term.
 - b. Probe for expectations/goals of the executive team.
 - c. Probe for pressure regarding these expectations.
 - d. Probe for aspects of “serving” the student population.
5. What expectations do you have for the Executive Team?
6. How has the Executive Team responded to these expectations?
 - a. Have they met them? How so or why not?
7. Has there been any difficulties or tension in the organization that you are aware of?
 - a. When did the problem first appear?
 - b. How did the problem develop? Probe for developmental aspects (discourse, socio-historical, developmental actions, praxis, and presence of multiples)
 - c. Does the problem still exist? How has it changed?
8. How has the leadership team responded to this problem?

- a. Probe for specific details
- b. Probe for management techniques (either-or, both-and, more-than)

Clearinghouse: Is there anything that we did not get to during this group interview you would like to add? Do you have any suggestions for future servant leaders?

APPENDIX C: CODEBOOK

Code	Notes from the Literature	Example quote
Value People	<p>A servant leader must make decisions that will not knowingly hurt anyone, directly or indirectly.</p> <p>Servant leaders remain true to valuing people as it prevents them from causing any harm</p> <p>“Stewardship, ethical behavior and collaboration through connecting to other people” (van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010, p. 3)</p>	<p>“What I really appreciate about [the president] this year is that she's very about like, ‘If y'all can.’ She's very patient, very caring, and always puts like, ‘Hey, self care first,’ right? It's refreshing to have that type of dynamic. And there's not so much pressure on us, I would say.”</p>
Develop People or Members	<p>Develop their followers by involving their followers in the decision-making process</p> <p>New leaders will emerge from the followers as they share their experiences and help lead the group towards a decision</p> <p>Other members will give away their power in choosing not to share their experience</p>	<p>“I think he really tried to leave that decision up to me and my team as much as possible. He really pushed for me to decide, and I am terrible at deciding things. I am so indecisive. And so that was really tricky for me, but I think that he really wants one of that to be in our hands.”</p>
Display Authenticity	<p>Servant leaders make discursive choices that allow them to be vulnerable when communicating with their followers</p> <p>They express this vulnerability by sharing their</p>	<p>“I feel like I've always been a pretty honest person. When people ask me, ‘Hey, you know what? Did you do this? Did you mess up here, or you accidentally did this? Or you accidentally said something you weren't supposed to.’”</p>

	<p>mistakes or failings with their team</p> <p>They discursively create an image of a leader who is imperfect by sharing these experiences</p>	
Build Community	<p>“Such a leader is one who ventures and takes the risks of going out ahead to show the way and whom others follow, <i>voluntarily, because they are persuaded that the leader’s path is the right one-for them</i>, probably better than they could devise for themselves” (p. 44, emphasis in original).</p> <p>Persuasion is chosen over coercion because it allows the members to decide whether to follow</p>	<p>“Whenever there's change like that, the way I approach it, I think the best way to approach stuff like this is to always have justification behind any type of change, right? So, in this manner, when I'm proposing new changes from the norm that's been done for so long, I justify it. And that allows the person who has been comfortable with these types of traditions to be more open about it, to see that there's positiveness to it, that there's benefits behind these types of changes. When people don't bring about any justification at all, obviously it's going to push some resistance on that on individuals, but change is needed to grow... But we have to be able to come to that compromise.”</p>
Provide Leadership	<p>The role of leadership is to oversee the goals, strategy, organization, and implementation of plans in an organization</p> <p>Servant leaders do these things by “establishing priorities, allocating resources, choosing and guiding staff, articulating goals and philosophy, and exerting a sustained pull for excellence” (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 868)</p> <p>The servant leader also uses framing to change action from <i>me/I</i> work to <i>us/teamwork</i> because they work under the assumption that collaborative work and</p>	<p>“Our executive director is somebody who really comes to mind when I think of servant leadership and he brings up conversations surrounding servant leadership all the time. I think he's also a great example of someone who is a servant leader. He's always bringing up that we have to take care of ourselves before we take care of our students. And I think that's something that I can back behind a hundred percent.”</p>

	problem solving creates better outcomes	
Share Leadership	<p>Shares the leadership with their followers by respecting and encouraging their followers' autonomy to share their experiences and make decisions when provided with enough context.</p> <p>Servant leaders seek paradoxes by inviting discussion of opposing truths</p> <p>They ask thoughtful questioning of their followers to guide them in the decision-making process while working with the assumptions that opposing perspectives can be true simultaneously and that unity is built by valuing differences</p>	<p>"I might have a perspective that I want to follow a certain path, but at the end of the day that's not my call to make. I will advise. So, the expectation is to be an adviser to the decision makers. I am not the ultimate decision maker. I don't sign the paperwork that makes any decision final. I'm just simply here to provide pros and cons to our leaders and to ensure that they make the best informed decision they possibly can. So, the expectation is really it's not about me. It's about our students in this case. It's about those who are making those decisions and how do we best support them, especially if it's a decision that completely goes against what I believe. And I don't want to say complete. That almost sounds like a very nuclear point of view. But it's more so like I might see it a certain way, but they might see it a way that they want to advocate for, and they being students, that at the end I have to just ensure, 'Okay, they made the decision, now how do we make sure we follow up or they're supported?'"</p>