
SERVICE BEFORE SELF: TOWARDS A THEORY OF SERVANT-LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

This article explores the relationship between perceptions of leadership and the level of trust between employees and supervisors. More specifically, this article seeks to begin a theoretical discussion of a particular leadership approach, servant leadership, introduces an instrument for measuring servant leadership, and presents the result of its initial use in a survey of 651 employees in a suburban Georgia county. While the results are preliminary, they show that one component of servant leadership, stewardship, is a determinant of trust level, indicating that “service before self” is not just a slogan, but a powerful reality that builds trust between employees and supervisors.

Introduction

Beset by scandal, faced with an apathetic and distrustful public, struggling to cope with and respond to a rapidly changing environment, and forced to provide more with less, the public service has tried it all. From the private sector, government has adopted down-sizing, re-engineering, total quality management, and reinvention to become more efficient and effective. In response to scandal, government has employed ethics commissions and laws to enforce virtue. Change, however, is difficult and complex. The challenges facing the public sector suggest the need to transcend traditional rationality and move

towards recognizing the pivotal role leadership plays, particularly leadership based on moral values, in fostering organizational performance.

Because it is an approach to leadership that is firmly grounded in ethical principles, servant leadership has grown greatly in popularity in the private and public sector among consultants and practitioners (Spears, 1998); however, it is a leadership concept that has not attracted scholarly attention. The vision of principled, open, caring leadership that servant leadership creates is deeply appealing to an apathetic, cynical public tired of scandal and poorly performing bureaucracies and stands in sharp contrast to the “ethics of compliance” so popular with governments today (Gawthrop, 1998).

But, servant leadership as currently articulated is an idealistic vision. Since Greenleaf wrote for the general reader, his writing on servant leadership does not clearly define the concept, distinguish it from other leadership theories, connect the concept with on-going research into leadership and performance, or explain how it might improve organizational performance. This paper will open a theoretical discussion on servant leadership by seeking to define the term, and examining theory and research on leadership, trust and performance. A model will be presented and tested that links servant leadership to an organizational culture of trust and the results of a preliminary study presented.

Servant Leadership Defined

Greenleaf developed the concept of servant leadership from an intuitive insight gained while reading Herman Hesse’s book, *Journey to the East*. In the book, a

band of men undertakes a long journey. The main character, Leo, a servant, does the menial chores for the group. Along the way, Leo sustains them with his spirit and his song. When Leo disappears, the group falls apart and abandons the journey; the group cannot function without him. Years later, the narrator finds Leo and discovers that he is in fact the head of the Order that sponsored the original journey. Leo, who is first encountered as a “servant,” is in fact, a great leader (Greenleaf, 1977).

From this story, Greenleaf drew many lessons about the role of the leader, and over time these lessons evolved into his concept of “servant leadership.” However, he provided no empirically grounded definition for the term. Instead, he merely proposes that the “servant-leader is servant first.” This open-ended definition leaves researchers with many unanswered questions.

To help clarify the concept, Spears (Spears, 1998) draws upon Greenleaf’s writing and proposes ten key elements of servant leadership: listening, empathy, healing (of oneself and others), awareness of others, situations and oneself, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community.

The servant-leader’s behavior is grounded in his or her concept of self as a steward of the organization and its people. The servant-leader holds the organization in trust to the public it serves (Greenleaf, 1977). The leader’s behavior is grounded in a strong sense of values or “virtue;” it resembles virtue ethics (Hursthouse, 1999) and the “substantive justice” stage of ethical development (Rest and Narvaez, 1994). Stewardship ensures that the servant-leader does not accept mediocre performance, but keeps

everyone focused on achieving organizational objectives within the constraints of shared organizational values. This view coincides with Gawthrop's (1998) call for a public service staffed with ethical public servants as opposed to relying on ethics based on conformity to rules.

This focus on objectives is balanced by a deep commitment to the growth of people and the building of community within the organization. As the litmus test for servant-leadership, Greenleaf (Greenleaf, 1977) proposes that the best test for servant leadership is: "Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society: will they benefit, or, at least, not be further deprived?" Greenleaf presumes that leaders either create or profoundly influence organizational culture. This is a presumption that is not shared, however, by many scholars in this field (Morgan, 1990).

In sum, the servant-leader is a steward who holds the organization in trust to the public it serves, while remaining intimately attuned to the needs and situations of those who work in the organization and sincerely committed to empowering others to succeed professionally and personally. Since neither Greenleaf nor Spears provided definitions clear and specific enough to be empirically tested, the following conceptual definition for a servant-leader is proposed: *A servant-leader is one who is committed to the growth of both the individual and the organization, and who works to build community within organizations.*

Servant Leadership and Leadership Theory

How does servant leadership compare with other leadership theories and concepts? Servant leadership is grounded in religious teaching; Greenleaf (1977) frequently refers to Christ as a model for his concept of the servant-leader. With its focus on the creation of a trusting community, servant leadership is highly consistent with Judeo-Christian philosophical traditions and teachings. But servant leadership also shares many of its ideas with other leadership theories.

For example, Mary Parker Follett (Follett, 1987) proposes that managers and the rank and file should work together to find solutions to problems or ways to improve performance. This is mirrored in Greenleaf's (1977) suggestion that the leader should be the *primus inter pares*, or "first among equals." By listening, conceptualizing a vision that others can respond to, and using persuasion, the servant-leader avoids coercion and seeks to become a partner with workers in building community in the organization.

Servant leadership recognizes another widely accepted truth in leadership theory: leadership is a relationship not a set of attributes or traits. "Leadership is not a property of the individual, but a complex relationship" between the characteristics of the leader, the attitudes and needs of the followers, the organization and its characteristics, and the environment (McGregor, 1960). With its stress on building community, listening, empathy, foresight and awareness, it is clear that servant leadership is based on the idea that leadership is a relationship, not a position.

Moreover, leadership is intricately bound up in

culture. Leadership can produce cultural change or simply reinforce existing norms (Masi, 2000). Thomas Sergiovanni (1984) and Fairholm (1994) propose that leadership seeks to build community in an organization. Leaders are charged with developing and fostering organizational value patterns and norms that respond to the needs of individuals and groups for order, stability, and meaning. Consequently, Fairholm (1994) recommends leaders bring perspective, guiding principles, a clear platform or statement of one's principles, and a sense of purpose to the organization. These ideas are echoed in Greenleaf's (1977) insistence that servant-leaders listen to and be aware of the needs of those within the organization, conceptualize a vision for the organization, become stewards of, and build, the organizational community.

One additional similarity to servant leadership deserves mention. Servant leadership calls leaders to build people and community, to dream great dreams and instill those in others, and to heal people in the organization. As such, it is similar to the major idea behind transformational leadership. Transformational leaders are charged to help build organizational vision, mobilize the organization to achieve that dream, and to institutionalize whatever changes are needed to make the dream become reality (Bass, 1996; Tichy and Ulrich, 1984). Transformational leadership is about healing broken organizations. Pulling them, through the beauty of a shared vision, into new ways of being and doing. In this respect, servant leadership is transformational leadership.

However, servant leadership does differ from transformational and other major leadership theories. For example, Bass (1996) acknowledges that transformational leadership can be authoritarian as well as participative. Both Fiedler's (1970) contingency model and Hersey and

Blanchard's (1969) life-cycle theory also propose that the authoritarian styles of leadership will be effective, under the correct circumstances (Fiedler, 1970; Hersey and Blanchard, 1969). Greenleaf (1977) completely rejects authoritarian or coercive approaches; indeed, he claims that the use of coercive power is destructive and ultimately results in the failure of the organization to achieve its objectives. Moreover, his theory lacks an adequate explanation of how the leader should reconcile conflicts between the objectives of individuals and the needs of the organization as a whole.

In addition, both the contingency model (Fiedler, 1970) and the life-cycle theory (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969) focus on *behaviors*. In these leadership theories, it is the leader's behavior that is important and to which followers respond. Greenleaf (1977) centers servant leadership on attitudes. For Greenleaf, it is the leader's attitude of service towards his or her followers that distinguishes the servant leader from other types of leaders.

Finally, Bass (1996) proposes that transformational leaders transcend their personal, self-interests for *either* utilitarian or moral purposes. In contrast, Greenleaf (1977) stresses the moral component of leadership virtually to the exclusion of utilitarian concerns.

While servant leadership rejects some of the principles underpinning the contingency, life-cycle and transformational theories of leadership, it has clear connections with many, long-standing leadership concepts. Servant leadership, with its emphasis on building community, is a form of transformational leadership that seeks to build both the people within the organization and the organization itself. With its emphasis on the connection between the leader and followers, and the leader and the

organization, servant leadership clearly rejects old ideas of leadership as a set of traits, in favor of leadership as a relationship. Finally, by emphasizing the idea of working with employees, servant leadership echoes Follett's dream of employees and management working as a team solving organizational problems.

Servant Leadership, Trust and Building Community

Greenleaf (1977) suggests that servant leadership produces organizational success because it builds or creates a trusting, supportive community that fosters creativity and initiative. In this sense, servant leadership is the independent variable that causes or produces a culture or community of trust that in turn produces organizational success. Thus, trust serves as an intervening variable between servant leadership (the independent variable) and organizational success (the dependent variable). Both Green leaf (1977) and Fairholm (1994) presume that leaders, through their control over information sources and organizational rewards and sanctions, are the principal architects or creators of organizational culture.

Fairholm's concept of a "culture of trust" also illustrates the connection between leadership, organizational culture, values, trust and performance. According to Fairholm, leadership "facilitates joint action by accommodating difference and redirecting it to joint action" (Fairholm, 1994: p. 56). Leaders, in his view, are responsible for building an organizational culture founded on trust that will, in turn, produce organizational success. Leaders are called to exhibit predictability and consistency within an open and ethical climate in order to build the "culture of trust."

Values, according to Fairholm (1994), are at the core of organizational culture. Among his “elements of a trust relationship,” Fairholm (1994) lists authentic caring, ethics, individual character (expectations of openness and trust), and leadership with a service orientation. The view of ethics he advances is consistent with the substantive justice stage of moral development (Rest and Narvaez, 1994). Fairholm (1994) proposes that leaders build trust in organizations by fostering participation, engaging in helping relationships with employees, actively listening to workers, and using a consistent leadership style.

The parallels with servant leadership are clear. Servant leadership is leadership squarely based on values (Greenleaf, 1977), specifically values of trust, respect and service. Fairholm’s “elements of a trust relationship” are echoed in the servant-leader’s elements of listening, healing, empathy, awareness and stewardship (Spears, 1998). Greenleaf’s (1977) call for leaders to serve as *primus inter pares* is clearly participative leadership. The emphasis on healing, empathy, awareness and listening in servant leadership are identical to Fairholm’s “helping relationship” and “active listening” ways of developing trust.

Within the empirical literature, a number of definitions of trust have emerged. Most can be categorized as deterrence or calculus-based trust, knowledge-based trust, and identification-based trust (Lewicki and Bunker, 1996). Deterrence or calculus-based trust is based on consistency of behavior; that is, that people do what they say they are going to do. Punishment is the most frequent consequence for failure to maintain consistency. Knowledge-based trust is based on behavioral predictability. This kind of trust is possible when people

have enough information about each other to be able to reasonably predict what the other will do under various circumstances. The third type of trust, identification-based trust, is based on empathy. This occurs when people understand, agree with, empathize with, and take on the other's values (Lewicki and Bunker, 1996).

Lewicki and Bunker (1996) propose that these three types of trust occur in sequence. Relationships begin with deterrence-based trust. Over time, as communication develops and the parties get to know one another, relationships proceed to knowledge-based trust (Lewicki and Bunker, 1996). Individual's perceptions of others' trustworthiness is largely history-dependent (Kramer, 1999). Finally, when mutual understanding is achieved, trust can reach the final stage, identification-based trust (Lewicki and Bunker, 1996). Fairholm (1994) clearly has this final stage in mind when he stresses the importance of shared values and organizational culture in his concept of the culture of trust.

Various factors have been proposed as leading to conditions of trust. Hovland proposed, as a result of experimental research, that credibility was based on the perceived expertise and trustworthiness of the communicator (Hovland, Janis and Kelley, 1953). Mayor, Davis and Schoorman (1995) propose that to be perceived as trustworthy, leaders must exhibit ability, benevolence, and integrity. Ability refers to skills and competency needed within a particular arena, and is clearly related to Hovland's concept of expertise (Mayor, Davis and Schoorman, 1995). Benevolence is "the extent to which a trustee is believed to want to do good to the trustor (Mayor, Davis and Schoorman, 1995: p. 719)." Integrity refers to the trustor's perception that the trustee believes in, and behaves in accordance with, an accepted set of principles

(Mayor, Davis and Schoorman, 1995).

Servant Leadership, Trust and Organizational Performance

Greenleaf (1977) proposes that servant leadership improves organizational performance because it fosters trusting relationships. Although this proposition has never been tested empirically, there are solid theoretical reasons for believing he may be correct. Recent research into the connections between leadership, values, trust, organizational climate and work productivity supports Greenleaf's ideas.

Trust can in fact be linked to individual and organizational performance. "Trust establishes the framework for productivity. Trust creates an environment that encourages cooperation and allows employees to concentrate their attention on the task" (Daley and Vasu, 1998: p. 62). Productivity results when individuals are free to use all their skills, talents, creativity and knowledge. At the individual level of analysis, trust is linked to more accurate problem identification, successful problem-solving (Zand, 1972) and increased success in negotiations (Butler, 1999). At the organizational level, trust is linked to job satisfaction (Daley and Vasu, 1998), enhanced transaction efficiency, reduced monitoring costs, and more initiative and flexibility in negotiations (Sako, 1992), and organizational learning (Dodgson, 1993).

Sufficient empirical evidence exists to demonstrate a linkage between organizational performance and trust. If an organization's performance can be conceptualized as the sum of individual workers performance, then conditions

which improve individual workers' performance will improve the organization's performance. Trust is demonstrated in both experimental and real world settings as a powerful factor in determining job satisfaction, and fostering individual productivity. This study, therefore, takes the relationship between trust and performance as substantiated.

Conceptual Definitions of the Study Variables

For trust to have its most influential effects, it must be embedded into the organization's culture rather than existing only among individuals. Hence, Greenleaf calls for servant leaders to build community. Fairholm's construct of a "culture of trust" is one that could be adopted as an intervening variable directly affecting organizational performance. For this study, trust will be used as the dependent variable and is defined as "an organizational climate characterized by predictability, consistency, and ethical behavior."

But what creates or contributes to that "culture of trust?" Again, theory and empirical studies suggest that leadership, through its control of communication channels and work conditions, plays a major role in building an organizational culture of trust. By fostering open communications, listening, being competent and predictable, caring, and ethical, leaders foster trust. Greenleaf would propose that servant leadership is the type of leadership needed to build a culture of trust. Spears' ten characteristics of servant leadership are not sufficiently precise for empirical study. The tenth characteristic, "building community," is more usefully considered as the outcome of servant leadership. For the purposes of empirical study, and in keeping with other theories of

leadership, the ten characteristics were re-conceptualized into three characteristics-- openness, vision and stewardship-- comprising the independent variable, servant leadership. Openness, vision and stewardship build the community of trust that improves organizational performance.

Spears' elements of empathy, listening, and awareness of others are interrelated and reasonably considered to represent "openness." Empirical research that has repeatedly demonstrated that open communication is essential to building trust in organizations.

Conceptualization and foresight are also strongly related to one another. It is hard to conceive of a situation where one could build a vision (conceptualize) without being able to place situations within their context and anticipate future possibilities (foresight). Therefore, these two elements can be conceptualized as "vision." "Vision" is defined as the degree to which leaders plan and anticipate for future needs, develop concrete mission or vision statements, and keep situations and problems in perspective.

Finally, Spears' (1998) elements of healing, persuasion, stewardship and commitment to the growth of people are also intimately intertwined. Can a leader "heal" without being committed to the growth of people? As a consequence, these elements can be conceptualized together as "stewardship." For purposes of this research, "stewardship" is defined as the degree to which leaders put the needs of others and the organization before their own personal needs, use a participatory leadership style, and are committed to the growth of employees and the organization.

Taken together, these three components: openness, vision and stewardship, provide a way to operationalize servant leadership. In summary, servant leadership is defined as “leadership that puts the needs of others and the organization first, is characterized by openness, vision and stewardship, and results in building community within organizations.”

Methodology

The researcher used survey research to test the proposed model of servant leadership. While survey research does test perceptions as opposed to ‘reality,’ it is appropriate for this research since it is individuals’ *perceptions* of leader behavior that trigger subsequent responses (Ilgen, et al., 1979). Five items measuring the degree of openness were adapted from a previous study on trust and communication in organizations (Reinke and Baldwin, 2001). Nine items measuring stewardship and vision were developed based on the conceptual definitions discussed in the previous section. The final 12 questions, measuring the level of trust, were adapted from Nyhan and Marlowe’s (1997) Organizational Trust Inventory.

The survey instrument was initially tested with 18 cadets in a campus Army ROTC unit. Although an ROTC unit is not the same as work environment, like all military units, an ROTC unit places great emphasis on building trust between its commissioned officer faculty (cadre) and the cadets, and esprit-de-corps within the unit. To eliminate unrelated items and to increase the internal validity of the scales, items were factor analyzed with a varimax rotation. Items correlating with their principle component with an *r* of .50 or above served as the variable scales. The results of this trial were used to refine the instrument. The

coefficient alphas for the four revised scales were .8054 for trust, .8756 for openness, .5231 for vision, and .9083 for stewardship.

After the initial trial, the instrument was further revised. The revisions were needed for two reasons. First, the instrument was to be embedded into a larger survey instrument examining county employee attitudes towards the performance appraisal process, and county officials were concerned to keep the survey as short as possible in order to increase the response rate. Second, since the focus of the county's study was on employee attitudes towards appraisal, the researcher and the county agreed that only items testing trust between individuals and their supervisors should be included in the final instrument.

Two major changes were made to the instrument. First, the original 15-item questionnaire on servant leadership was reduced to the 7 items having the highest correlations with their principal component. Second, the 12-item trust inventory was replaced with a 4-item scale that was adapted from previous research (Reinke and Baldwin, 2001). The coefficient alpha's for this version were .86 for trust, .88 for openness, .52 for vision, and .91 for stewardship, identical to the original version with the exception of trust, which had an increased alpha coefficient. This resulted in the final version, provided at the end of this article. Items 1-2 measure levels of openness; items 3-4 measure vision; and items 5-7 measure stewardship.

The final version of the instrument was administered to all 651 employees of a suburban county in Georgia. Since the county's objective for the study was to examine employee attitudes towards the performance appraisal process, all employees were surveyed. A total of

254 employees responded for a return rate of 39 percent. The only drawback to using this group was the lack of variability in the population's racial demographics. Although the demographics of the respondents closely matched that of the county's workforce, only 9.5 percent of the respondents identified themselves as African-American, Hispanic, or other.

Results

To test the proposed model, Pearson Product Moment correlations were initially calculated. Table 1 demonstrates that all of the independent variables were significantly related ($p < .01$) to the dependent variable, trust. Moreover, all correlations are in the predicted direction. The table also reveals that the various components of servant leadership were highly correlated with each other. Such high correlations indicate the possibility that the proposed components may not be separate concepts in the minds of respondents.

Table 1
Correlations between the Independent and Dependent Variables

	Trust	Openness	Vision
Stewardship			
Trust	1.000		
Openness	.738**	1.000	
Vision	.692**	.610**	1.000
Stewardship	.813**	.760**	.700**

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

To determine if supervisory status, gender or race had any influence on the four variables, analysis of variance was conducted. There were no statistically significant differences for either race or gender; however, differences based on supervisory status were significant for two of the four variables, openness ($F=5.110$, $p=.025$) and vision ($F=4.397$, $p=.037$). In both cases, supervisors were more likely to believe that their supervisors were open to suggestions and feedback, and provided some sense of vision in their leadership.

Multiple regression was then conducted to test the cumulative impact of openness, vision and stewardship on trust, while controlling for each other. Unstandardized beta coefficients indicate that stewardship was the most powerful of the independent variables, followed by the supervisor's vision, and the degree of openness in the relationship (Table 2). All together, the proposed model explained 71 percent of the variation in the dependent variable, trust.

Table 2
Regression Predicting the Elements of Trust

<u>Trust</u> Independent Variable	B
SE (B)	
Openness	.211***
.045	
Vision	.206***

	.049	
Stewardship	.054	.444***
R ²	.712	
<u>Overall F for equation</u>		
	209.855***	
*p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001.		
n = 254		

Using the stepwise procedure, 66 percent of the variation in the dependent variable, trust, is explained by the stewardship behavior of the supervisor. The supervisor's vision added an additional 3 percent to the explained variance. The degree of openness the supervisor exhibited contributed 2 percent to the regression equation's explanatory value. That openness and vision contributed little to the equation may be a reflection of the difficulty in separating these concepts from that of stewardship.

To examine the moderating effects of the independent variables on each other, three interactive variables were created: openness times vision, openness times stewardship, and vision times stewardship. However, to reduce multicollinearity between the interactions and the independent variables comprising the interactions, the measures of the variables in the interactions were centered around zero before being regressed with the dependent variables. This was accomplished by subtracting the mean of an independent variable from the measures of the variable before multiplying the variables in the interaction together. The remaining independent variables were also centered around zero by simply subtracting the mean

(Aiken and West, 1991).

The results of the subsequent regression analysis demonstrate that stewardship still accounts for most of the variance in the dependent variable, trust. Unstandardized beta coefficients indicated that stewardship, vision and openness are all significantly ($p < .001$) related to trust levels. None of the interactions was significantly related to trust levels. Table 3 depicts the results of the interaction analysis.

Table 3
Regression Predicting the Elements of Trust (with interactions)

<u>Trust</u> <u>Independent Variable</u>	<u>B</u>
<u>SE (B)</u>	
Openness	.193***
.046	
Vision	.195***
.049	
Stewardship	.459***
.055	
Openness x Vision	1.420E-02
.051	
Openness x Stewardship	-7.222E-02
.037	
Vision x Stewardship	4.944E-02
.054	

R^2

.713

Overall F for equation105.997***

*p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001.

n = 254

Conclusion

Servant leadership provides a vision of principled, open, caring leadership. Unfortunately, there currently exists no empirical theory that defines servant leadership, distinguishes it from other leadership theory, or explains how it might lead to improved organizational performance. This paper opened a theoretical discussion on servant leadership by proposing a definition and examining theory and research on leadership, trust and performance. Ultimately, a model was proposed linking servant leadership, characterized by openness, stewardship and vision, to an organizational culture of trust. This culture of trust, in turn, leads to organizational performance.

With a theory outlined, a project was initiated to empirically test the validity of Greenleaf's theory. The results of the regression analysis support Greenleaf's theory that a leader who is open to communication with subordinates, possesses a vision for the organization, and behaves as an ethical steward can improve the level of trust within an organization. Servant leadership, as operationally defined in this study, is clearly related to the creation of trusting relationships. Previously published literature has firmly established the connection between trust and performance. Hence, it seems clear that servant leadership can improve organizational performance by its

ability to create organizational trust.

However, trust, like leadership, is a complex topic that does not easily lend itself empirical study. While the results of this preliminary study are certainly suggestive, they cannot conclusively prove that leadership creates trust. The literature on trust (Lewicki and Bunker, 1996; Kramer, 1999; Butler, 1999) suggests that trust is history-dependent; trust and leadership interact in a complex, self-reinforcing cycle. Which of the two comes first is a question that has not yet been addressed conclusively. In the absence of a definitive answer, leaders would do well to behave as though they are responsible for earning the trust of employees.

The powerful effect of the stewardship component of servant leadership lends support to the importance of ethical behavior in organizations. This component was measured using questions about the employee's perceptions of the supervisor's behavior and priorities. Specifically, two of the items in the scale measured whether the supervisor placed employees' needs before his or her own, and the organization's needs before his or her own. The selfless behavior captured in this scale was the most powerful determiner of the level of trust, indicating that "service before self" is not just a slogan. Instead, it is a powerful reality that builds trust between employees and supervisors.

One cautionary note is in order. The strong correlations between the various components of servant leadership in this study—openness, vision and stewardship, point out the difficulty of separating such closely related concepts. Logically, placing others needs before one's own, as measured in the stewardship scale, should promote openness in communication between supervisors and

employees. Similarly, the development of vision should promote communication. From the standpoint of a respondent, these concepts may not be clearly separable. More research, discussion of the theory, and refinement of the present instrument may improve it for future use.

In this regard, several avenues for further research suggest themselves. First, an organization's culture could play a powerful role in influencing how leaders behave, and perceptions of trust. Incorporating measures of organizational culture might shed light on the nature of these connections. Second, this instrument should be tested again, with a more demographically diverse sample. While the population used for this study was adequate for an initial test of the instrument, using a more demographically diverse sample would allow researchers to find out if cultural or racial differences affect how individuals perceive leadership and trust in organizations.

This preliminary exploration of Greenleaf's servant-leadership theory will help us gain greater insight into the connections between leadership, trust and performance. This project demonstrated the link between a particular type of leadership, servant leadership, and the creation of trust within the organization, which in turn fosters high performance. In today's environment, where trust in the public service is seriously eroded, finding ways to improve public sector performance is of first importance and merits serious attention from researchers.

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Biographical Sketch

Dr. Sandra Reinke is an Associate Professor and Director of the MPA Program at Augusta State University. Dr. Reinke's research interests are in trust, leadership and human resource management. She is a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel, and an ordained deacon in the Episcopal Church. She can be contacted at sreinke@aug.edu.

Servant Leadership Inventory

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I feel comfortable telling my supervisor about departmental problems	1	2	3	4	5
2. My supervisor listens to what employees have to say.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My supervisor emphasizes doing the right thing for the long-term benefit of all.	1	2	3	4	5
4. My supervisor never puts things in perspective—we're always reinventing the wheel around here.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My supervisor is committed to helping employees grow and progress.	1	2	3	4	5
6. My supervisor puts employee needs first—before looking out for him or herself.	1	2	3	4	5
7. My supervisor puts the needs of the organization first—before looking out for him or herself.	1	2	3	4	5

Trust Inventory

8. My supervisor is reliable.	1	2	3	4	5
9. My supervisor is consistent.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I can count on my supervisor to tell me the truth.	1	2	3	4	5
11. My supervisor is qualified in my field.	1	2	3	4	5