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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: THE MEDIATING ROLES OF TRUST AND FIT

By
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A DISSERTATION

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Abstract

While servant leadership has become a widely adopted leadership style throughout the marketplace, there is limited empirical evidence to support the true organizational relationship between servant leader factors and outcomes. The purpose of this research was to study the significance of the relationship between servant leadership factors and employee engagement via the mediating factors of trust and fit within a Fortune 500 organization. Servant leader factors such as altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship were hypothesized to have a positive impact on employee engagement as a state of vigor, dedication, and absorption.

I proposed that those leaders who were perceived to be practicing servant leadership in the workplace have a more significant relationship to cultivate trust and advance fit perceptions which in turn drive the state of employee engagement.

Over the course of a two-week period, employees from four geographic locations throughout the United States were asked to first assess their leader’s effective use of servant leadership factors and in a subsequent online survey, asked to assess their own engagement, their perceived fit, and overall trust. A total of 233 participants completed the servant leadership assessment and follow-up fit, trust, and engagement assessment. A correlation analysis was conducted where the results showed significant relationships. Servant leadership factors found supportive relationships in driving overall trust, enhancing perceived fit, and ultimately improving employee engagement as a state of being. Therefore, organizations and leaders should adopt and train servant leadership factors to build trust, augment fit perceptions, and improve overall employee engagement.
Dedication

This is dedicated to the most supportive person I know, my wife Jenny, for her patience, sacrifice, and understanding during countless hours spent on this journey. Also, to my dog Lincoln, who sacrificed many games of fetch along this voyage.
Acknowledgements

My journey to understand servant leadership began when I met the Sisters of Mercy during my undergraduate studies at Mount Mercy University. During this time I met some of the most influential people along my journey of life, including a professor, my mentor and friend, Tom Castle, who has encouraged me along this journey. It was through my coursework where I learned the importance of lifelong learning and my engagement in the community where I learned the impact one person can have.

Fortunately, through these opportunities at Mount Mercy I was introduced to an organization that was built and continues to operate under the principles of servant leadership, Aflac. It was during my first interview that I knew there would be a fit between my values and that of the Duck. My first boss, Bob Ottman, not only exemplified, but cultivated the traits of servant leadership that further inspired me to continue my lifelong learning, organizational leadership, and community engagement.

More importantly, I realized how fortunate I had been to be raised by parents, surrounded by siblings and family that exemplified the principles of servant leadership through their dedication to those less fortunate. Their love and support continues to inspire me and others to leave the places and people I encounter better than they were.

Last but certainly not least, I owe a great deal of gratitude to the Creighton University community and my dissertation committee. Dr. Isabelle Cherney and my advisor Dr. Donna Ehrlich provided unwavering support and encouragement along the journey. I truly appreciate my dissertation Chair Dr. Todd Darnold for his direction, Dr. Jim Martin for his analytical support, Dr. Dan Wheeler for his wisdom on servant leadership and Dr. Stuart Rayfield for her guidance along the path of servant leadership.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

While the Great Man state-theory of leadership may have been a formidable approach to leading in the 20th century and prior, individualistic leadership behaviors are becoming less popular amidst changing generations and organizations that seek to engage employees through trait-leadership styles (Hoffman, Woehr, Maldagen-Youngjohn, & Lyons, 2011). According to a study conducted by Harvard’s Kennedy School for Public Leadership “80% of Americans feel that there is a leadership crises in the USA and 79% feel that unless there was a radical change in leadership styles, the nation’s growth would decline” (Doraiswamy, 2012, p. 179). Whether it is transformational, authentic, or transactional factors, leadership theories have sought to find support of the styles’ effectiveness related to productivity and profitability, but rarely the impact on employee engagement.

Although each construct is unique, there is not a universal agreement by scholars and practitioners that any one style will solve or has solved the perceived leadership deficit that exists today (Endrissat, Muller, & Kaudela-Baum, 2007). It is for the above-mentioned reasons that this study reviewed servant leadership, which is a relatively new leadership style as it relates to academic research, to address the growing organizational concern on leadership and how to best engage employees. By surveying employees and leaders within a Fortune 500 company, this study sought to answer the question; do those that practice servant leadership have a higher impact on employee engagement levels through the mediating factors of trust and perceived fit?
Servant Leadership

Servant leadership was originally coined by the late Robert Greenleaf in the 1970s. While some try to compare servant leadership to styles such as authentic, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) or transformational leadership, there remains key differences:

The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is this: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 27)

Servant leadership is not something one self-defines as being, but rather is described as by followers whom one serves. In fact, servant leaders start off first as followers and servants before ascending into leadership. They display factors such as having an altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006, p. 311). As opposed to all other styles that focus on the factors of the leader, servant leadership combines behaviors of the leader and successes of the follower to define achievement (Walumbwa, Hartnell, & Oke, 2010).

While there are differences in the competencies and technical skills needed throughout the marketplace to engage employees, leadership behaviors are the key to organizational success (Steed, 2012). In fact, a study outlining ethical leadership styles found that 59% of the variance in the performance of an organization was attributed to either authentic or servant leaders (Politis, 2013).
Furthermore, this study utilized the Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ) instrument created by Barbuto and Wheeler (2006), which included specific factors as they relate to servant leadership. The differentiating factor of servant leadership compared to other styles is the initial calling to first serve, and then lead, comprising the basic principle of altruistic calling. It is the passion of an individual to leave the place in which he or she is better than when he or she found it through service that put the thoughts and needs of others before one’s own. Four other factors comprise the servant leadership model. Emotional healing is the ability for the leader to create an environment that allows people to recover from the adversity or stress in their lives. A third component is wisdom, “Wisdom can be understood as a combination of awareness of surroundings and anticipation of consequences” (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006, p. 318). Fourth is the ability to engage individuals in the overall vision of the organization by integrating an understanding of how they can make a difference within their daily activities to the overall goals is manifested in the factor of persuasive mapping. Lastly, the factor of organizational stewardship reflects not only a leader’s ability to create community within the organization, but also his or her passion for making a positive impact on society as a whole.

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is the product of behaviors displayed by individual leaders within an organization that drive loyalty, trust, productivity, job satisfaction, and discretionary effort. It has only been recently that measures of employee engagement have shown to be a key attitudinal measure in academia and the marketplace. More established attitudinal measures of job satisfaction and involvement have been the foci of
research, but neither was found to measure the state of engagement as an effect of antecedents occupied by employees as they employ and express themselves in various situations (Kahn, 1990; Macey & Schneider, 2008).

Moreover, recent academic literature on employee engagement has helped to distinguish the construct into three distinct measures; these are: state, trait and behavioral factors as defined both by the attitudinal and behavioral being of individuals (Macey & Schneider, 2008). While each of the three factors have been proven important in the research on employee engagement, this study specifically focused on the psychological state of being due to the fact that the psychological state of engagement also considers job satisfaction, job involvement, organizational commitment, and psychological empowerment. This distinction between engagement as a state of being versus overall satisfaction is important to note. Although measures of satisfaction specifically outline the environments that provide an employee the opportunity to be engaged, the actual state of engagement of employees is the focal point of this study.

The behavioral factor of engagement is focused on the Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCBs), role expansion and the adaptive behavior of employees whereas the trait factor focuses on the positive views of work and life within the conscientiousness of the employee (Macey & Schneider, 2008). As the research points out, the state of engagement is focused on the feeling of energy, one’s involvement and commitment to an organization which has been translated to vigor, dedication, and absorption for the purpose of measuring the factors (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006):
Engagement is a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Rather than a momentary and specific state, engagement refers to a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behavior. (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006, p. 5)

It was the work by Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova (2006) which helped to distinguish the psychological state of engagement that had previously been unsuccessful in connecting the popular satisfaction surveys with the state of engagement.

There is significant relevance as to why Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova (2006) focused on three key elements as they relate to employee engagement:

Vigor is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working … Dedication refers to being strongly involved in one’s work and experiencing a sense of significance … absorption is characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one’s work. (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006, p. 702)

Additionally, vigor encompasses a willingness to invest in one’s work in a tireless manner, even when facing difficulty, which effectively creates a positive emotional state within an individual. As outlined, dedication includes a sense of significance that leads to a feeling of enthusiastic pride while performing a task; it is the ongoing pride and inspiration one has in one’s job. Lastly, absorption is that persistent commitment to a task in which time appears irrelevant and in turn, makes it difficult for one to detach from their work when one is not physically at work (Alarcon & Edwards, 2010; Schaufeli, 2012; van den Berg, Bakker, & ten Cate, 2013).
Organizational Paradigm Shift

Moreover, organizations have shifted their sole focus on the bottom line of a ledger to a more holistic approach including how to best engage employees and communities. This transformation is highlighted by the coveted *Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work For* list and other community/trade recognition awards that have become the cornerstone for many organizations in their candidate recruitment and employee retention efforts. There has been a paradigm shift as organizations strive to be seen as a community citizen, in addition to being fiscally responsible, and that shift aligns with the servant leadership movement. “In *Fortune’s* most recent installment of the *100 Best Companies to Work For*, more than one-third, thirty-five-plus organizations, are involved in the servant-leadership movement and/or specifically identify servant leadership as a core operating principle” (Hunter, 2004, p. 18). In 2011, five of the top ten organizations to work for according to Fortune were practitioners of servant leadership (Lichtenwalner, 2011).

Furthermore, many very well respected companies are advocates of servant leadership in the workplace including organizations like Southwest Airlines, The Container Store, TOMS, Aflac, and Zappos. While Southwest Airlines enjoyed being at or near the top of Fortune 500’s list of *Best Companies to Work For*, the key to industry leading profitability and customer satisfaction success for Southwest Airlines is attributed to the practice of servant leadership in its corporate office and in the air (McGee-Cooper, Trammell, & Looper, 2008).
Contrary though, there are some researchers and authors that discount servant leadership as a style that would work for all organizations or that servant and leader are mutually exclusive “Shareholders would be impatient with the servant leader; the leader who is not aggressive, can not or will not articulate a vision, and does not strive to maximize short-run profits” (Giampetro-Meyer, Brown, & Browne, 1998).

Without rigorous research to support the impact of servant leadership, statements like the previous permeated academic articles to discount the business impact of servant leaders in the past. In fact, recent research suggests that servant leadership is less related to follower perception of leader effectiveness than other styles (van Dierendonck, Stam, Boersma, de Windt, & Alkema, 2013). That, coupled with a lack of agreement on definition and measurement makes servant leadership too ambiguous to become an integrated style in practice. In fact, Spears (2004) suggested that formalizing the servant leadership model would not be effective because he believed it is a philosophy versus a leadership style to be compared with others. With a growing interest in the topic though, servant leadership continues to rise as a style that companies use to not only sustain, but grow. In fact, rigorous research led Jim Collins’s *Good to Great*, (2001) to highlight the impact that *Level 5 Leaders* have on great organizations and considered calling these servant leaders, but did not because the philosophy was considered too soft. While he did not call them servant leaders, he pointed out that the best leaders have humility and don’t seek success for personal satisfaction; factors that can be found in all servant leadership literature. Rather, as servant leaders are defined, they also focus on team and organizational achievement to drive the organization from good to great along with a culture of serving.
Additionally, while organizations continue to spend money on leadership development to drive bottom line outcomes, there is a key performance indicator that is often left out of consideration in business planning and training development; employee engagement. Whether one is a university president, chief of nursing, or a vice president at an entrepreneurial firm, employee engagement is not a subjective matter as it was once thought of, rather it is something that can be objectively measured and assessed. Consequently, employee engagement is a business result based on a focus by the organization to drive certain behaviors that in turn drive business results (Dalal, Baysinger, Brummel, & LeBreton, 2012; van Dierendonck, et al., 2013). In fact, engagement has led some public sector employees to be twice as likely to stay in their jobs and 2.5 times as likely to feel they are making a difference (Lavigna, 2013). Historically, money was thought a key motivator in the workforce, but studies continue to find research that money only gains organizations a small increase in success measures while job fit, employee engagement, and leader interaction drive discretionary effort (Howes, 2008; Pascual-Ezama, Prelec, & Dunfield, 2013). With growing competition for talent in the market, leaders are beginning to realize the value of engaged employees in the workplace.

Moreover, while job satisfaction, commitment, loyalty, and other attitudes have been at the core of measuring employee’s feelings towards an organization for years, more recent work on topics such as perceived organizational support and employee engagement have come to the forefront of literature and practice (Dalal, et al., 2012). An engaged employee is becoming an evaluative cornerstone of many organizations, but is what they are measuring truly engagement or job satisfaction replaced with new words?
As mentioned previously, employee engagement can be categorized as three distinct measures to include state, trait, and behavioral attributes. The majority of literature related to the impact of employee engagement is associated to the aforementioned behaviors (Hunter, et al., 2013; Macey & Schneider, 2008), or Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB) as they relate to outcomes and their linkage to theories such as transformational and authentic leadership styles (Tims, Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2011; Walumbwa, Wang, Wang, Schaubroeck, & Avolio, 2010). This particular study aimed to add to the employee engagement research as it relates to the state of an employee as outlined by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) as a state of vigor, dedication, and absorption.

This study will advance the servant leadership literature by being the first to connect servant leadership with employee engagement as a state of being, trust, and perceived fit. More specifically, this study investigated the relationships between a distal predictor of employee engagement, servant leadership; and two more psychologically proximal variables, trust, and perceived fit.

**Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of many servant leadership studies has been to develop an assessment construct or behaviors that frame the theory (Hu & Liden, 2011; Laub, 1999; Parrish and Zimmerman-Oster, 2010). While surveys and assessment tools have been created and utilized to help determine if one is a servant leader, the problem is that only a select few have used these tools to then study outcomes such as organizational goals and OCBs. Also, Industrial-Organizational research has for decades focused on negative attributes of job dissatisfaction, burnout, and turnover whereas limited in nature is the positive focus on employee engagement (Macey & Schneider, 2008).
Not only is there significant importance in identifying future leaders for industry, but also in pinpointing those behaviors that provide for the long-term success of an organization as it relates to engagement and performance. Rarely though, are leadership factors the foci of research or development as evidenced by The Bridgespan Group’s survey (2012). Their results indicated that nearly two-thirds of respondents disagree that “our organization is highly effective in developing a strong internal and external pipeline of future leaders” (Kramer & Nayak, 2012). This study sought to add to the scholarly research related to the significant relationship servant leaders have on an organization that can immediately be put into practice.

Moreover, while organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) have been the topic of a myriad of studies to explain engagement as well as discretionary effort in the workplace related to leader factors, few have studied the antecedents that drive those behaviors. Also, most studies focused on leadership styles tend to emphasize organizational performance via employee productivity. Limited in nature is the research related to the impact various leadership styles have on employee engagement as a result of mediating factors such as trust and perceived fit, which highlights the significance of this study for literature in academia and the development of leaders in the marketplace to drive organizations forward.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study was to identify the impact that servant leaders have on employee engagement as a state of vigor, dedication, and absorption via the mediating factors of trust and perceived fit within a Fortune 500 insurance organization. In doing so, this study addressed the gap in the extant literature described above.

Research Questions

Moreover, it was recently referenced in The Leadership Quarterly that “There remains a need to better understand the scope and magnitude of the influence that servant leadership has on a range of multilevel outcomes” (Hunter, et al., 2013). While other studies have focused on productivity and efficiency, this study looked at servant leadership as it relates to employee engagement which includes the integration of mediating factors of trust and perceived fit. This approach helps in contributing to both the servant leadership and employee engagement literatures by addressing the following questions:

Question 1: What is the relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement?

Question 2: What servant leadership factors are most strongly related to mediating factors of trust and perceived fit?

Question 3: Might trust and perceived fit mediate the relationship between employee engagement and servant leadership?
These foundational questions and literature review in the following chapter help to highlight the various gaps in the current literature that drove the research purpose and corresponding hypotheses to be highlighted prior to the method overview. From the questions and the literature review, five hypotheses were created to frame the research around relationships between servant leadership factors that drive engagement via the mediating impact of trust and fit.

**Definition of Terms**

**Servant Leadership Style:** refers to the various attributes displayed by individuals within an organization that is often referred to in literature as a leadership construct and model, but for the purposes of this study, it will be referred to as a style when explained and compared to other leadership styles.

**Employee Engagement:** refers to the state, traits, and behaviors (Macey & Schneider, 2008) that drive organizational goals such as loyalty, productivity, and discretionary effort – focused in this study primarily on the state of engagement.

**Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB):** refers to the observable traits of employees within an organization that reflect individual and organizational performance.

**Organization:** refers to an institution comprised of employees that offer a good or service in the public or private sector.

**Person-Organization (P-O) Fit:** refers to an alignment between an individual and organizational culture and values (Cable & DeRue, 2002).
Person-Job (P-J) Fit: refers to Needs-Supply (N-S) fit where there is an alignment between the recognition and rewards realized by an individual for their on-the-job contributions. It also refers to the Demand-Ability (D-A) which is an alignment of the requirements of a job or task and the skills by which one has to complete the job or task (Cable & DeRue, 2002).

Servant Leadership Factors: the term factors used throughout this paper aligns with the research from Barbuto and Wheeler (2008) who utilized the term servant leadership factors to describe the attributes, traits, characteristics, behaviors, and personalities outlined by leaders throughout research. Note, at different times attributes, traits, and characteristics will be used when referencing particular academic studies that preferred the aforementioned definitions.

Trust: the term represents the level of confidence one has in an organization and in individuals that they will act with consistent integrity in their words and actions.

Summary

In order to examine the relationship servant leader factors have on employee engagement as a state of being via mediating factors of trust and perceived fit, this study used an online survey research methodology within Corporate America. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature as it relates to the advancement of servant leadership and employee engagement. Key components that were assessed related to servant leadership include the evolution of the style, an analysis of various constructs created to measure servant leadership, and a comparison to other leadership styles in order to highlight the unique relationship servant leadership has on society.
Additionally, employee engagement was evaluated as it relates to other attitudinal measures such as job satisfaction and involvement as well as an in-depth review of employee engagement measurement instruments related to behaviors, traits, and a state of being (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Finally, the mediating factors of trust and perceived fit were reviewed to build context, relevance, and a measure of the indices that helped to construct the theoretical framework.

Furthermore, Chapter 3 provides a comprehensive overview of the research design, survey channel, participant selection, sampling procedure, and synopsis related to the data analysis. It is from this research methodology that the resulting analysis will be presented in Chapter 4. Lastly, Chapter 5 includes an overview of the research findings, overall conclusions as it relates to the aforementioned hypotheses, implications for organizations, and a call for further research as it relates to servant leadership and employee engagement.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The previous chapter laid the foundation for this study focused on the relationship that servant leaders have on employee engagement, setting the stage for this literature review. Foundational is an overview into the evolution of leadership over time which has paved the way for servant leadership. In order to understand the relationship of servant leadership factors, reviewing the seminal and recent work on the style was imperative. Furthermore, a review of the various constructs created to measure servant leadership was important to help in selecting the best instrument for use in the study. Also, the following chapter helps to distinguish servant leadership from transformational, authentic, and Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) as a unique style.

Moreover, Chapter 2 builds upon the preceding definition of employee engagement by reviewing the original and current work. Additionally, it was necessary to compare and contrast employee engagement to the more popular job involvement and satisfaction constructs to assist in finding the distinctive relationship engagement has on an organization. Lastly, a review of the various measures of engagement was essential in order to select the tool that would help in measuring the dependent variables of the study. The rigorous review of these components within Chapter 2 builds upon the foundation for a sound study to determine the relationship that servant leaders have on employee engagement.

Lastly, this chapter focuses on the mediating factors that help to define the connection between servant leadership factors and employee engagement as a state of being. Included is a review of the literature related to factors that have significant
research relating employee engagement to servant leadership such as psychological fit and leadership effectiveness. Additionally, the relationship trust has with engagement as well as measures of perceived fit that coincide as mediating factors was reviewed for inclusion into this study’s research. Essential was not only a review of the literature, but the integration of the assessment tools that were included in the study to build upon the hypothetical model and provide supportive data for it.

**Evolution of Leadership**

Leadership, or the lack thereof at times, can be tied to the majority of the defining moments throughout all of history from presidents and kings to military leaders and scientists, leaders have shaped our world into what it is today and will be tomorrow. The style by which each of these men and women engaged in throughout history was telling of the time in which they ruled, served, and led. For centuries, leadership has stood for positional power, societal status, and the authority that comes with a title. Leadership research has had a similar evolution highlighting first a period on who was a leader which was followed closely behind by what a leader does. The evolutionary process then led to a focus on where leadership takes place in various situations to meet the needs of a multitude of constituents (Polleys, 2002).

Research began by exploring personal characteristics and psychological traits to help pinpoint who a leader was. Throughout the centuries, the biggest man was often identified as the leader of tribes and clans because those individuals “emerged as a solution to specific group coordination challenges— group movement, intragroup conflict, and intergroup competition” (van vugt, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2008, p. 184). This Great Man theory of leadership lasted for thousands of years as kings, chiefs, and
warlords used hierarchical power to rule over groups of people (Hoffman, et al., 2011). This leadership style was fit for the times as humans evolved from a nomadic culture to one built on communities brought together by a common goal to survive and strive (van vugt, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2008). Unfortunately, there is very little empirical evidence throughout academic research that proved the repeatable value of these various Great Man traits to ensure the longevity of this stage of leadership (Trivers, 2009).

Moreover, it was because of this inability to measure the impact of leader traits that academic work began to review various behaviors displayed by leaders to help determine organizational and societal outcomes. Beginning in the 1940s:

- scholars studied leaders either by observing their behavior in laboratory settings
- or by asking individuals in field settings to describe the behavior of individuals in positions of authority, and relating these descriptions to various criteria of leader effectiveness. (Trivers, 2009, p. 13)

Following was an academic focus on pinpointing the various leader behaviors that made a leader successful alongside expectancy and exchange theories that integrated the outcomes of followers in relation to leader behaviors focused on either tasks and/or the people he or she was leading.

More recently, the focus on who a leader is and what a leader does has become secondary to where leaders are. This situational or contingency theory of leadership is a recent revolution in practice and research relatively speaking in terms of leadership styles. It was the work of Fiedler (1964) that helped to pave the way for contingency theory where one would identify his or her current style, pinpoint the situation, and determine the most effective style for that situation/individual. It is the basic concept that
no one leadership style works for every situation, rather, it is contingent based on not only the moment, but the individual’s needs as well. Many scholars and business leaders utilized models such as the work from Fiedler, the Leadership Judgment Indicator constructed by the Hogrefe group, or the Situational Leadership Model created by Kenneth Blanchard to educate leaders on situational leadership. To this day, contingency theory is being researched to determine the effectiveness while other leadership styles emerge in academia and practice.

While no one leadership style has been empirically proven to be the most successful in every situation throughout history, it is the combination of the styles that have helped to shape where our society, the marketplace, and the research are today. From the humble beginning of the selection of a clan chief based on their physical stature to the democratic election process of a country’s leader based not only on their traits, but behaviors as well, the evolution of leadership has paralleled the evolution of the human race. While contingency and situational leadership has helped to further progress in the public and private sector, leadership styles will continue to evolve to meet the growing needs of followers and society, including a focus on not only leading, but serving.

**Defining Servant Leadership**

There has been a paradigm shift in leadership styles in the last century which transformed from the more authoritarian and Great Man theory to styles more affiliated with relationships, charisma, and trust (Hoffman, et al., 2011). Unique in this paradigm shift of leadership styles was the thought that effective leaders first sought to serve.
This concept was founded in the seminal work of servant leadership by Robert Greenleaf (1970). For decades after, servant leadership has been researched and written about in novels, journals, and periodic works by some of the world’s most prominent leadership professionals who had their own thoughts on servant leadership, but always at the core was the essay by Greenleaf, *The Servant as Leader* (1970).

After a lengthy career in Corporate America, Greenleaf was keen on the impact leaders have on organizations, which is why he founded the Center for Applied Ethics. While fostering an environment where leaders could develop he happened upon the book *Journey to the East* (Hesse, 1956). It was the characters in this book that sparked Greenleaf’s pivotal essay that coined servant leadership as a style key in transforming leaders throughout industry. Greenleaf wrote that one who is first a servant may in turn aspire into a position of leadership or have leadership bestowed upon them based on their service, but not to first seek a leadership role like all other leadership styles portray. Moreover, servant leadership sets itself apart from other styles in that through service and not a formal position one could be considered a servant leader.

Greenleaf began by outlining the importance of initiative within the individual because a leader is followed when he or she is able to portray a clearer vision of the future. Next, Greenleaf reiterated the importance of listening versus reacting because by listening first, a leader will be able to identify the root of many problems and needs for more solutions. By listening, a servant leader takes part in the first phase of communication that then leads to the secondary component, language, and the imaginative connection. As Greenleaf wrote, “The limitation on language, to the communicator, is that the hearer must make that leap of imagination. One of the arts of
communicating is to say just enough to facilitate that leap” (1970, p. 9). Furthermore, he outlined that a servant leader has the ability to withdraw and find reprieve amidst the pressure of the role. A conscious effort to accept and empathize with others during difficult times is another basic component for servant leaders according to Greenleaf.

These factors allow a servant leader to tolerate imperfection and accept people for who they are instead of just what they do. Moreover, a key element of a servant leader is his or her ability to have a conscious sense for the indistinct situations and foresight, whereas others may not be able to see what is over the horizon. Being aware and perceptive of people along with their surroundings also allows servant leaders to strengthen their effectiveness by being cognizant of the environment in which they occupy. Greenleaf further highlighted that persuasion versus coercion of people is what distinguishes servant leaders from authoritative figures that demanded compliance. While foresight allows servant leaders the ability to see what others may not be able to, it’s the conceptualizing ability that allows servant leaders to paint an inspirational picture of the future. Also, the power of serving and healing is a unique factor compared to other leadership styles that allows for one to be made whole and feel a part of a community whereas on one’s own one would be left alone to fend and mend oneself (Greenleaf, 1970).

While Greenleaf outlined a multitude of factors related to the leader as servant, he followed up his initial work to conduct a detailed review of institutions and trustees as servant leaders (Greenleaf, 1977). He acknowledged that if society is seeking to change the landscape of business, academia, and individual leaders throughout industry, a conscious effort to make that change is necessary. “All of this rests on the assumption
that the only way to change a society is to produce people, enough people, who will change it” (p. 60). Consequently, the timing of Greenleaf’s writing during the 1960s and 1970s highlighted the growing concern from employers about engagement, or more relative, the lack of it. It is this work and his further mentoring of leaders and organizations that has fostered a climate where servant leadership is revered, studied, and implemented to make positive change.

Furthermore, one of the most prominent scholars of the seminal servant leadership work by Robert Greenleaf is Larry Spears, the former President and CEO of the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership and current President and CEO of the Spears Center for Servant-Leadership. Spears has written about the organizational shift where leaders once thought of employees as a means to a profitable end whereas now, employees are engaged in the strategy, vision, and lasting-impact an organization has on society (Spears, 2004). Throughout his dedicated research, Spears outlined ten essential characteristics of a servant leader based on the writings of Greenleaf to include: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community.

Spears (2004) called for leaders to be intent on not only hearing what their employees are saying, but truly listening and reflecting on the thoughts of the group in order to have the ability to act. Empathy is a key characteristic that helps servant leaders value the unique attributes that make up a person, and while a servant leader may not agree with the behavior of an individual, he or she would still accept that individual as a person. After accepting people as they are, servant leaders are aware of the positive impact they must have in healing team members to help make them whole from
emotional distress that may permeate their lives. Fourthly, awareness, beginning with self-awareness, is a key attribute of a servant leader as he or she assesses situations with a moral lens and holistic perspective. Whereas many leaders of the past and present rely on their title to drive behaviors, servant leaders rely on persuasion to “convince rather than coerce compliance” (Spears, 2004, p. 9) which helps to build group consensus.

Conceptualization is often referred to as one of the main distinguishing characteristics between task-managers and leaders in their ability to see beyond the tasks of the day while dreaming of the future. Along with being able to conceptualize the future, servant leaders have the foresight to learn from the past and understand the impact of the current situation in making future decisions. While transactional and transformational leaders strive to meet the goals solely of the organization, servant-led organizations and people integrate community stewardship as a key success factor in measuring their impact on their people, organization, and society as a whole. Moreover, while dedication to the greater good of society is imperative for servant leaders, a commitment to the growth of their people to help them realize their true potential as servant leaders themselves is paramount. Lastly, servant leaders understand and appreciate the importance of community within an organization by striving to create relationships that build a sense of belonging. While each of these characteristics individually are not necessarily unique to servant leaders alone, Spears believes the sum of them all helps to distinguish servant leadership from other styles throughout academia and industry.

As a distinguished scholar on leadership and leader of the largest management/leadership development organization in the world, Stephen Covey wrote a myriad of books and articles related to various leadership styles and the corresponding
impact they have on organizations. In his foreword to Greenleaf’s (2002) reprinted work, Servant Leadership, Covey refers to servant leadership as a style deeply rooted in the belief that leaders should use moral versus formal authority. He outlined four dimensions that summarize the foundational values of servant leaders: the essence of moral authority or conscience is sacrifice, conscience inspires us to become part of a cause worthy of our commitment, conscience teaches us that ends, and means are inseparable and conscience introduces us into the world of relationships (Greenleaf, 2002).

Margaret Wheatley (1998) reflected upon Robert Greenleaf as an individual responsible for helping to create a new normal for leaders that strive to understand themselves in order to engage others. She is hopeful in that leaders will adopt this style of servant leadership that trusts individuals to create and produce for the purpose to provide a better organization and community. Wheatley (1998) outlined the impact that servant leaders have because “They trust that we can create wisely and well, that we seek the best interests of our organization and our community, that we want to bring more good into the world” (p. 16).

Furthermore, Ken Blanchard (1991) adopted the concept of servant leadership as a way to help overcome the standard style that directs, controls, and supervises employees’ efforts that are then judged and criticized by the leader. The focus on teaching and coaching is what Blanchard believes sets servant leaders apart as they strive to achieve organizational goals. He points out that the only way leaders can achieve this servant mentality is to remove their ego from the equation and truly focus on doing whatever they can to build up their team members to achieve their goals and contribute to society.
William (Bill) Turner is a business icon in the Southeast as the former President and CEO of the W.C. Bradley Company and past member of the board of directors for Coca-Cola. As both a believer and practitioner of servant leadership within his organization, Turner flipped the traditional hierarchy model that had a boss on the top and employees that strive to please the boss by carrying out their vision. Contrary to the norm, he implemented a model at the W.C. Bradley companies that aligned a common vision to serve the customer, serve each other, and build community through servant leadership (Turner, 2000). Bill noted that “integrity is the greatest competitive weapon a business has” (Turner, 2000, p. 7). He believed that servant leaders fostered an environment that called for creative ideas and actions that formed the common vision to serve. This model created a commitment in the culture to the vision set forth by Bill which had a direct impact on the everyday behaviors to deliver their products because everyone was held accountable for both the ends and the means.

In addition to the aforementioned thought-leaders that not only created, but added value to the servant leadership style, there remain leaders throughout industry that have popularized servant leadership. In fact, Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) noted that leaders of three of the top businesses to make the Fortune Top 100 Best Companies to Work for in America adhered to the servant leadership principles identified including Southwest Airlines, Synovus Financial, and TDIndustries.
Herb Kelleher is one of the most notable CEOs of the last 20 years as he led a company to record profits amidst an industry wrought with bankruptcies and buyouts. One of the key factors to Kelleher and Southwest’s success was the focus on service to not only the customers, but employees by the leadership team. Additionally, the former Chairman and CEO Jimmy Blanchard of Synovus noted the importance a servant leader has on instilling meaning into work making all employees feel a part of the greater good (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002, p. 62).

It is not just those in business or management professionals that have made their mark in defining the impact of servant leadership, but also many throughout academia. As with any new style, there remains a need to create the ability to assess the factors and impact it will have on individuals and organizations. In the next section, a review of six academic scholars reveals the importance of a valid assessment tool in order to solidify the place servant leadership will take among the myriad of leadership styles already in practice.

**Measuring Servant Leadership**

In order to make theoretical progress possible as it relates to servant leadership adequate measurement is required (Schwab, 1980). For decades after Greenleaf (1970) coined the term servant leadership as a new leadership style, scholars and business leaders had used the theory as just that, a theory without empirical evidence to support. Not until the late 1990s and early 2000s was there an assessment tool available for scholars to utilize in research. What was needed first was the ability to identify who was a servant leader and from that, what impact does he or she have on organizations. During the review of the literature, there were six assessment tools that were found ranging from
dissertation work and academic pieces to peer reviewed journal articles. In chronological order, the review included a detailed look at assessments as it relates to the process used to create the tool, the factors identified throughout the style, the utilization and/or testing of the tool, and an analysis of the benefits as well as the deficiencies of each tool. The assessments that received a thorough analysis included Laub (1999), Page and Wong (2000), Sendjaya (2005) Ehrhart (2004), Barbuto and Wheeler (2006), and Liden, Wayne, Zhao, and Henderson (2008).

**Organizational Leadership Assessment**

Without prior knowledge of an available instrument geared towards pinpointing servant leaders, Laub (1999) based his dissertation work on the creation of a multi-dimensional tool to assess agreed-upon characteristics. Before assembling the tool characteristics, Laub conducted his own literature review to outline 46 characteristics to begin the study. He used the feedback from the expert panel to create the *Servant Organizational Leadership Assessment*, which “is designed to provide organizations and teams a tool with which to assess the perceived presence of servant leadership characteristics in their group” (Laub, 1999, p. 37). He created a cluster of six characteristics including: values people, develops people, builds community, displays authenticity, provides leadership, and shares leadership. Before Laub finalized the study, he conducted a field test to assess the tool’s validity throughout 41 organizations. With a response rate greater than 50%, Laub was able to assess the validity and repeatability of the instrument across numerous industries.
While the original dissertation assessment of the tool found relationships between some of the characteristics, this tool has been adapted over time into the *Organizational Leadership Assessment* (OLA). Similar to the original instrument, the OLA is focused on measuring servant leadership at the organization level versus at the individual level.

**Servant Leadership Self-Assessment**

Page and Wong (2000) hypothesized that organizational success would become more long-term by shifting the paradigm from a task and structure focus to the people and processes of an organization. One of the key underpinnings behind Page and Wong’s work to build a servant leadership assessment tool was because they felt that “The popular appeal of servant-leadership has not translated into academic respectability, because of its lack of a research base” (Page & Wong, 2000, p. 13). Page and Wong generated a list of 200 descriptors, which they referred to interchangeably in the study as characteristics. After identifying the initial list, the pair pinpointed duplicate descriptors while both combining and splitting up the remaining to address unique aspects of servant leadership that resulted in 100 descriptors to begin their modeling.

Between Page and Wong (2000), they classified their descriptors into 12 categories to include: integrity, humility, servant hood, caring for others, empowering others, developing others, visioning, goal-setting, leading, modeling, team-building, and shared decision-making. By utilizing these categories, they were able to create a structural construct to frame up their instrument that consisted of: character orientation, people orientation, task orientation, and process orientation.
In order to test the validity of the self-assessment their 99 question self-assessment, Page and Wong (2000) conducted a small pilot study with six leaders and 18 students in a Christian educational setting. They measured the internal reliability of each of the 12 categories and found encouraging support for the overall reliability of the instrument. While there was a positive correlation in the data, the small sample size, limited respondent diversity, and single-level nature of the assessment leaves room for additional research opportunities. Page and Wong also acknowledged that there is conflicting research as it relates to the validity of self-assessments versus a more multi-level approach with both self and follower assessments which opens the door for research to expand upon their findings.

**Servant Leader Factor Assessment**

Additional work related to the creation of a servant leader tool was completed by Sendjaya (2005) which included a mixed-method approach in creating a proper instrument. Sendjaya took a different approach to generating servant leader themes by conducting qualitative interviews with 15 senior executives from both for-profit and not-for-profit organizations (Sendjaya, 2005, p. 2). Then, Sendjaya compiled 32 themes associated with servant leadership that were reviewed and pared down to six dimensions that had 22 correlating sub-dimensions.

The makeup of the six dimensions included: voluntary subordination, authentic self, covenantal relationship, responsible morality, transcendent spirituality, and transforming influence. A panel of experts was asked to rate dimensions based on three key components: representativeness, comprehensiveness, and clarity. Following the rating, Sendjaya (2005) conducted a pilot test with 277 graduate students at Monash
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University to test the validity of the instrument. While Sendjaya’s research found positive correlations for the six dimensions being conceptually distinct, the results were inconclusive in supporting the model due in part to highly correlated dimensions. Further analysis to assess the assessment’s validity may lead to additions and/or deletions to the instrument moving forward to be utilized in academic research.

**Servant Leadership Item Assessment**

In an effort to effectively distinguish the style of servant leadership from transformational and Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) styles, Ehrhart (2004) created an assessment tool based on seven dimensions: forming relationships with subordinates, empowering subordinates, helping subordinates grow and succeed, behaving ethically, having conceptual skills, putting subordinates first, and creating value for those outside of the organization (Ehrhart, 2004, p. 73).

Prior to the analysis, Ehrhart (2004) tested the servant leadership tool for validity with 254 employed students in conjunction with a transformational and LMX style assessment to measure a multitude of factors, including satisfaction with one’s manager. Even though there was a relationship found between the servant leader, LMX, and transformational assessments, the initial results supported servant leadership as an antecedent to student-to-manager satisfaction. While Ehrhart’s creation of a servant leader tool helped to outline the importance of leadership as a precursor to positive OCB, little was done to validate the tool as an assessment that could be utilized in future research on the topic.
Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ)

While organizational outcomes are always measured, the antecedents that create the environment for them to occur have received less attention. Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) made a concerted effort to highlight the fact that “A service-oriented philosophy of an approach to leadership is a manifestation of and an antecedent to enabling a wise organization” (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006, p. 300). With the rising popularity of servant leadership as a relevant style of leadership, the authors found it necessary to develop a proven scale that would allow for additional empirical research to advance the model in both the academic and organizational settings.

Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) outlined 11 factors as it related to Greenleaf’s servant leadership language to include: calling, listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, growth, and community building (p. 304). From the list of 11, the authors put together statements related to each which created 56 factors for review by an expert leadership panel of faculty and doctoral students. The participants were asked to categorize each of the 56 factors, and after subsequent revisions, each of the items were correctly categorized greater than 80% of the time into the 11 factors. It was only after the pilot assessment that the 11 were reduced to five factors labeled as: altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship.

Before the authors finalized the instrument, they administered a test to 388 followers along with 80 elected community leaders throughout the Midwest. It was during this pilot that Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) reduced the factors to the aforementioned five. Unlike most other servant leader assessments, this instrument
included both a leader and rater version to increase the reliability of the measure. This multi-level analysis method assisted in evaluating the validity and reliability of the tool as well as the distinctive nature of servant leadership in comparison with LMX and transformational leadership. While the test was geared mainly towards elected officials who would assume a natural tendency towards the style of servant leadership, this construct provides a solid foundation for further research related to for-profit and not-for-profit organizational assessment.

**Group-Level Servant Leader Scale**

Most recently, Liden, Wayne, Zhao, and Henderson (2008) sought to build upon research that highlighted the positive behaviors of leaders in a society that all too often focuses on the dysfunctional behaviors of a few. One of the key drivers of their research was to ensure a differentiation between servant leadership and other more researched styles. Most specifically, the authors focused on distinguishing between LMX and transformational leadership.

The literature “offers an inconsistent set of dimensions that define this (servant leadership) construct” (Liden, et al., 2008, p. 162). Based on previous studies and their research, a set of nine dimensions were decided upon to include: emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skills, empowering, helping subordinates grow and succeed, putting subordinates first, and behaving ethically (Liden, et al., 2008, p. 162).

In an effort to test the validity of the instrument, 298 students from a Midwestern university were a part of phase one of a pilot study for the 85 item assessment. After analyzing the feedback from the university students, Liden, et al. (2008) synthesized data
from previously mentioned studies to create a 28-item scale for the next test. The analysis of the assessment tool allowed for the authors to identify support for their hypotheses while at the same time creating a construct that could be used in future research with limited deficiencies outside of the follower-only focus.

Table 1

**Servant Leadership Instrument Assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Type</th>
<th>Assessment Tool Results</th>
<th>Number of Questions</th>
<th>Servant Leadership Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laub 1999</td>
<td>An extensive study of more than 800 respondents from 41 organizations across industry. Found useful as a measurement of organizational, not individual, leadership.</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Values people, develops people, builds community, displays authenticity, provides leadership, and shares leadership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sendjaya 2005</td>
<td>Moderate pilot of 277 graduate students found that while the constructs were conceptually distinct yet highly correlated</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Voluntary subordination, authentic self, covenantal relationship, responsible morality, transcendent spirituality, and transforming influence.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Type</th>
<th>Assessment Tool Results</th>
<th>Number of Questions</th>
<th>Servant Leadership Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ehrhart</strong> 2004</td>
<td>Assessment of the tool by 254 employed students showed a moderate correlation between Transformational and LMX styles. Results also showed a positive correlation between servant leadership and leader satisfaction.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Forming relationships with subordinates, empowering subordinates, helping subordinates grow and succeed, behaving ethically, having conceptual skills, putting subordinates first, and creating value for those outside of the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Barbuto &amp; Wheeler</strong> 2006</td>
<td>Pilot test with 388 raters and 80 elected community leaders outlined both reliability and validity for the instrument in measuring servant leaders.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Liden, Wayne, Zhao &amp; Henderson</strong> 2008</td>
<td>Phase 1 testing of 298 university students helped to pare down the tool for the organizational assessment of 164 employees resulting in both individual and aggregate team data to support the model.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skills, empowering, helping subordinates grow and succeed, putting subordinates first, and behaving ethically</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparing Alternate Leadership Styles

Studying leadership has and will continue to be a focal point for social science research because of the importance it has on every organization, no matter the industry. Whether individuals are studying leadership to understand antecedents that cause certain behaviors, pinpointing those behaviors that drive organizational performance or the consequences of certain factors, leadership styles vary drastically. While there are a myriad of leadership theories, servant leadership has most notably been linked to three styles including transformational leadership, authentic leadership, and Leader-Member Exchange (LMX). Each of these styles has research which supports the impact they have on organizations and while they may share certain factors, each style has its own distinct attributes.

Transformational leaders focus on motivating and inspiring employees to give discretionary effort in helping to achieve organizational goals (Tims, Bakker, & Xanthopoulou, 2011). Therefore, transformational leaders are keen on putting the goals of the organization ahead of their own and employees’ aspirations in order to achieve a common strategic goal (Hu & Liden, 2011). Recent research found support for the hypotheses that transformational leaders help to drive work engagement through the use of four tenants: inspirational motivation, idealized influence, individual consideration, and intellectual stimulation (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Tims, Bakker, & Xanthopoulou, 2011).

There are similarities between transformational and servant leaders in that the two styles each concentrate on using idealistic stimuli to inspire employees to go above and beyond their specific duties as well as the conscientious effort to use intellectual
stimulation to grow employees (Liden, et al., 2011). The differences can be seen as it relates to the priorities of the leader and role of the follower. While the transformational leader has a laser focus on developing employees for the sole purpose of driving organizational goals, the servant leader looks to grow the employee to become more autonomous, wiser, and freer for the betterment of society at large (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Furthermore, the transformational leadership style does not emphasize the importance of moral reasoning, which is a cornerstone of a servant leader and follower (Liden, et al., 2011).

Often, theories are formed out of the context of a previously established construct; such is the case for authentic leadership as it spawned from transformational leadership research (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009). Authentic leadership is keenly focused on self-awareness of the leader as he or she displays his or her morality in actions within his or her teams. There is a set of attributes that authentic leaders are categorized by which include balanced processing, internalized moral perspective, relational transparency, and self-awareness to engage their workforce (Walumbwa, Wang, Wang, Schaubroeck, & Avolio, 2010). By adhering to these attributes, authentic leaders connect with their followers by communicating important information while also integrating their ideas and input throughout the decision-making process. It is because of this transparency that authentic leaders are able to build trust with followers to drive improvement (Politis, 2013). Academic research on the topic takes a multi-level approach by examining both the leader and followers to determine the impact (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009).
Moreover, when comparing the authentic style of leadership to servant leaders, there are attributes that are shared. These include a focus on attaining self-awareness and building trust of the followers through words and actions. Although similar, differences are mainly seen in the outcomes that each style of leader is striving to achieve. An authentic leader is absorbed mostly with the development of the individual for the individual’s sake whereas servant leaders develop their employees not only for their own benefit, but that of the organization and society as a whole.

With an emphasis on the relationships between the leader and follower, Leader-Member Exchange, LMX is mainly concerned with the unique relationships that a leader builds with individuals and the premise that these relationships are what drive an individual’s performance (Mouriño-Ruiz, 2010). Although LMX is a relatively new style, research has found the positive impact LMX has had on both OCB and individual’s performance as it relates to the relationship (Ilies, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007). Additional studies have found evidence to support the predictive value that quality leader-member relationships have on discretionary effort and job satisfaction (Martin, Thomas, Charles, Epitropaki, & McNamara, 2005).

While both servant leaders and those that personify LMX factors focus on building relationships and developing their followers, there are still key differences. LMX focuses primarily on the impact to the follower whereas servant leaders strive to positively impact the follower, the organization, and society as a whole. Also, servant leadership has a greater focus on personal healing and adhering to moral standards to develop their followers while LMX focuses on the benefit of the leader relationships that are fostered with their followers (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Liden, et al., 2008).
Table 2

Comparing Leadership Styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transformational Leadership</th>
<th>Authentic Leadership</th>
<th>Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Inspire followers to achieve organizational goals</td>
<td>Engage in moral reasoning to connect with followers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenants</td>
<td>Inspirational motivation, idealized influence, individual consideration, and intellectual stimulation</td>
<td>Balanced processing, internalized moral perspective, relational transparency, and self-awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarities</td>
<td>Inspirational focus to drive behaviors</td>
<td>Focus on developing self-awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inspirational focus to drive behaviors</td>
<td>Building trust with followers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Difference to Servant Leadership</td>
<td>Desire to lead (TL) vs. a desire to serve (SL)</td>
<td>Desire to lead with integrity (AL) vs. desire to serve (SL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus solely on organizational goals (TL) vs. goals of the follower and society as whole (SL)</td>
<td>Focus solely on developing followers (AL) vs. goals of the follower and society as whole (SL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emphasis on moral reasoning (SL)</td>
<td>Emphasis on moral reasoning (SL)</td>
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Defining Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is quickly becoming a cornerstone of corporate business plans and academic research because of the growing support found on the effect positive employee engagement has on driving organizational outcomes. While research continues to support the positive impact it has on organizational goals, employee engagement is an ambiguous topic in practice as it often integrates several attitudinal measures (Dalal, Brummel, Baysinger, & LeBreton, 2012). This ambiguity led several researchers to conduct studies to help pinpoint the true meaning of employee engagement.

Initial research by Kahn (1990) alluded to the psychological state that engagement occupies within an individual as they employ and express themselves in various situations. This initial research has been built upon over the last 20 years to further establish the engagement construct as it is reviewed today. Additionally, engagement has been described as one’s satisfaction, involvement, and enthusiasm for their work as an individual or group (Harter, Hayes, & Schmidt, 2002).

More recently, Macey and Schneider (2008) outlined employee engagement most succinctly as a trait, state, or behavior. Walumbwa, et al., (2010) referenced the previously mentioned trait as a proactive personality, a behavior as it relates to Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB) and the state of engagement as commitment to the organization. These three classifications have assisted research in creating a construct by which to measure the impact of employee engagement as an established job attitude. While this construct has provided clarity as it relates to engagement, there still remains certain indistinctness when assessing job attitudes of employees throughout industry.
Outlining the Differences: Engagement, Satisfaction, and Involvement

For decades of academic research and practice, employers and scholars have been engrossed in the topic of job satisfaction and involvement to drive their business. While each have support in improving the bottom line, “Both measures are broad, context-free sweeps at how present people are at work, yet neither goes to the core of what it means to be psychologically present in particular moments and situations” (Kahn, 1990, p. 693). It is those psychological traits, behaviors, and the state of being that differentiate engagement from satisfaction and involvement.

Engagement differs from job involvement in that it is concerned more with how the individual employees his/her self during the performance of his/her job.

Furthermore, engagement entails the active use of emotions and behaviors, in addition to cognitions. (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004, p. 12)

Job satisfaction measures are helpful in evaluating the circumstances by which one can become engaged where “engagement connotes activation, whereas satisfaction connotes satiation” (Erickson, 2005). In regard to the connotation of activation and satiation, engagement encapsulates enthusiasm, excitement, and elation where satisfaction is more of a measure of a relaxed, calm, and content state (Schaufeli, 2012). Satisfaction does not compare to engagement as a measure of energy or activation for a job or task (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Furthermore, recent research has found empirical support regarding the unique impact that driving positive employee engagement has on predicting organizational outcomes versus satisfaction, commitment, and involvement (Dalal, et al., 2012) with engagement found to be the best predictor of OCB.
Measuring Employee Engagement

For decades, academia and industry have conducted surveys and produced research papers on job satisfaction in the workplace as the employee measure. It was not until the 1990’s that additional employee traits, behaviors, and states of mind were analyzed to determine their impact throughout industry (Dalal, et al., 2012). From there, employee engagement became a key buzzword within the market sparking additional research in academia to pinpoint not only the impact it has on business, but defining the associated measures. In sequential order, the employee engagement assessment evaluation will include a detailed look at assessments in relation to the construct’s process, the factors pinpointed in the assessment, the utilization and/or testing of the tool, and an overview of the benefits as well as the deficiencies of each tool. The assessments that will receive a detailed analysis include the Gallup Workplace Audit (1992-1999), Rothbard’s (2001) Work Engagement Scale, May, Gilson, and Harter’s (2004) Engagement Scale as well as Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova’s (2006) short Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES).
### Employee Engagement Instrument Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Type</th>
<th>Assessment Tool Results</th>
<th>Number of Questions</th>
<th>Construct Factors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gallup</strong></td>
<td>Expansive database of over 125 organizational respondents confirms the validity and reliability of the assessment for engagement as well as a measure for both antecedents and consequences of engagement.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Beginning with one question for overall satisfaction to know what is expected of them, have what they need to do their work, have opportunities to feel an impact and fulfillment in their work, perceive that they are part of something significant with coworkers whom they trust, and have changes to improve and develop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Workplace Audit</strong></td>
<td>A cross-functional assessment of 790 found positive correlations between work engagement and family engagement and supporting evidence for gender differences in inter-role engagement</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Attention and absorption of employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rothbard</strong></td>
<td>Individual assessment</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>May, Gilson &amp; Harter 2004</td>
<td>With 213 survey respondents, evidence was found to support the hypotheses that psychological meaningfulness and psychological safety were positively linked to employee engagement</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability of employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schaufeli, Bakker &amp; Salanova 2006</td>
<td>Numerous tests compiled an 11,000 respondent database from 14 countries that found the model both valid and reliable for testing of antecedents and consequences of engagement.</td>
<td>24 item long-UWES 9 item short-UWES</td>
<td>Vigor, dedication, and absorption within a work group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gallup Workplace Audit

When corporations want to determine the engagement of their workforce, the tool most likely to be referenced is the Gallup Workplace Audit (GWA; The Gallup Organization, 1992-1999). As the premier body for a multitude of organizational and national studies, Gallup has used qualitative and quantitative research to study individuals and work groups in order to develop measures of employee perceptions and popular opinion for decades (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002).

The Gallup Workplace Audit is a 12 question assessment tool first measuring overall satisfaction with additional questions geared at engagement on a five-point Likert scale. While each of the survey questions is unique in what it is seeking to measure, Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes (2002) have categorized the measurable factors into the following employee perceptions:

- know what is expected of them, have what they need to do their work, have opportunities to feel an impact and fulfillment in their work, perceive that they are part of something significant with coworkers whom they trust and have changes to improve and develop. (p. 269)

While the validity and reliability of the instrument has been thoroughly studied, the Q\textsuperscript{12} assessment is more geared towards measures of job satisfaction and job involvement. This leaves room for a more focused engagement measure to be used in addition to the proprietary concerns related to the assessment. The focus is not necessarily on the individual, but rather the work group as a whole since that is where the majority of organizational key performance indicators are geared.
Work Engagement Scale

Additional engagement studies focused on working to link conversely related items, such as engagement and depletion. Rothbard (2001) sought to do just that by measuring employee engagement and depletion as it related to life/work balance. The study’s hypothesis was that role engagement in one aspect would lead to another, for instance, positive role engagement at work results in positive engagement at home (Rothbard, 2001). A multi-dimensional focus was employed by the research; the two dimensions were attention and absorption. Attention focused on the period of which one is focused on either work or family tasks while absorption was focused on concentration one had within the tasks at hand with either work or family.

Unlike the other engagement surveys that are outlined in this review, Rothbard’s (2001) Work Engagement Scale did little to corroborate the scale’s validity and reliability. While a survey of 790 respondents was conducted, it was geared towards comparing the controlled variable related to demands of each role in relation to their respective engagement. By utilizing fit testing and evaluating the structural and measurement model, Rothbard (2001) found evidence to support that work engagement leads to family engagement and vice versa. Unfortunately, while these findings supported the hypothesis set forth by the research, it did little to validate the components of the engagement assessment as a valid tool of measurement.

Engagement Scale

Likewise, May, Gilson, and Harter (2004) created an Engagement Scale that was rooted in the research by Kahn (1990) and his theories related to the intertwined nature of engagement and disengagement measures. May, Gilson, and Harter (2004) noted the
limited nature by which the theory had been researched, which led them to the creation of the study focused on defining which antecedents lead to work engagement. In order to identify the relationships between a set of 24 items aimed at pinpointing engagement, the authors yielded inconclusive support for separate reliable scales (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004, p. 32). Therefore, they were able to pare down the work engagement assessment to focus on six items related to psychological meaningfulness, three items geared towards psychological safety and five related to psychological availability.

Measures of psychological meaningfulness, safety, and availability were used in conjunction with various assessments of work-related antecedents to find support for their hypotheses. May, Gilson, and Harter (2004) hypothesized that job enrichment, work role fit, rewarding co-worker relations, supportive supervisor relations, co-worker norm adherence, resources, self-consciousness, and outside activities were sound antecedents to an employee’s engagement. The authors’ quantitative study of an insurance company located in the Midwest yielded a 79% response totaling 213 respondents. The theoretical framework that May, Gilson, and Harter (2004) hypothesized was that each antecedent would have a positive impact on meaningfulness, safety, and availability in addition to those three having a positive impact on overall engagement in the workplace.
The research found evidence to support that both meaningfulness and safety were key components for employee engagement, whereas safety had a lower correlation. While the authors’ hypotheses were supported for the majority, they did little outside of an exploratory factor analysis to validate their Work Engagement scale as a sound measure of employee engagement. Rather, they relied on the compilation of previous work to build the assessment construct to support their theory.

**Short Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES)**

For this study, the Utrechet Work Engagement Scale (UWES) was selected for use. Originally a 24-statement assessment, it has been continuously reviewed and culled from a 17- to a nine-point scale, all of which have been utilized in academic studies from the early 2000s to today (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). The purpose of the UWES assessment tool is to measure specifically the cognitive state of an employee as it relates to their state of engagement within an organization.

In an effort to address the growing interest in positive organizational psychology, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) sought to continuously improve upon and validate the UWES through the usage of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) general survey (Maslach, Leiter, & Jackson, 1986). This comparison allowed the researchers to conduct a review of the original 24 statements as they compared to their inverse, employee burnout. Included in this review was a psychometric evaluation that allowed Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) to discard seven statements that proved unreliable for the study. Additional studies by the pair found quantitative support to reduce the UWES to a nine statement tool which assisted in streamlining the utilization for future research on positive organizational behavior (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2006).
The UWES research provides more than a decade of academic feedback and a database of measurements across industry to validate the construct. Recently, academic researchers have utilized the UWES to determine if certain styles of leadership impact employee engagement (Tims, Bakker, & Xanthopoulou, 2011). Furthermore, it has been used to measure the impact employee engagement has on organizational outcomes including overall performance and OCBs (Dalal, et al., 2012).

**Mediating Factors Review**

A simple focus on the impact leadership factors have on engagement may find empirical support to explain the relationship, but more rigorous is a review of the mediating factors between leaders and followers in how they build engagement. Leaders drive behaviors not by just being leaders, but by showcasing confidence in their abilities, meeting the needs of their followers, building trust, and outlining the fit between an individual and the organization. The following is a review of the mediating effect of these factors between leadership and the eventual outcomes related to employee engagement as a state of being.

One of the most foundational mediating factors between leadership and outcomes is trust, which is also a primary component of the servant leadership style. Trust is endowed upon a leader “as a result of the subordinate finding the leader’s judgments and actions to be thoughtful, dependable, and moral” (Liden, et al., 2008, p. 174). Employees outline trust as a central mediator in a leader’s ability to influence behaviors that drive both engagement and performance. While a review of additional mediating factors is necessary, trust is the cornerstone of these factors and thus a central component to this study.
Most recently, psychological need satisfaction and leadership effectiveness were studied and compared to various leadership styles including transformational and servant leadership as it related to follower outcomes (van Dierendonck, et al., 2013). The study found support that both transformational and servant leadership are more influential on outcomes such as need satisfaction, leadership effectiveness, and work engagement as measured by the UWES-short engagement scale when compared to transactional and Laissez-faire leadership styles. Also, this study helped to differentiate the mediating factors of leadership effectiveness and need satisfaction on engagement and between transformational/servant leadership. While transformational leadership factors were more positively related to leadership effectiveness, servant leadership was found to have a higher correlation to both organizational commitment and needs satisfaction, which are key mediators to work engagement (van Dierendonck, et al., 2013).

Additional mediating factors between leadership and follower outcomes continues to be the focus of a myriad of studies to include a focus on perceived Person-Job (P-J) and Person-Organization (P-O) fit (Chi & Pan, 2011; Leung & Chaturvedi, 2011). While P-O fit was not supported by Chi & Pan’s research as a mediator between transformational leadership and job performance, the components of P-J, which include Need-Supply (N-S) and Demand-Ability (D-A), were found positively correlated as a link between transformational leadership and job performance (Chi & Pan, 2011). Moreover, objective measures of fit empirically explained both organizational commitment and job satisfaction while perceived and subjective fit were found as the mediating factors in this relationship between leadership and the outcomes researched (Leung & Chaturvedi, 2011).
The importance of mediating antecedents between leadership and employee engagement is not only central to previous research, but to this research effort. These mediators are significant because they build upon a theoretical framework to outline the impact that leadership factors have on driving follower trust, a psychological state of mind, and perceptions of organizational fit that lead to engagement. As previously mentioned, recent academic studies have found support of an employee’s positive perception of leader effectiveness as a mediator between leadership and engagement behaviors (OCBs); but, none have been found that have focused on servant leadership as it relates to the state of engagement. On top of that, this is the first study to integrate mediating factors of trust and organizational fit as they relate to servant leadership and engagement. Trust is one of the focal points because “servant leader behaviors are moderated by trust when predicting performance-related outcomes” (Liden, et al., 2008, p. 174).

**Measuring the Mediating Factors**

In order to build a rigorous theoretical model that outlines the relationship that servant leaders have on employee engagement, it is imperative to integrate the aforementioned mediating factors into the analysis. Therefore, assessment tools for both trust and organizational fit were reviewed to find the most appropriate measure. This review included background on the creation of the tool, the various factors included for assessment, the utilization and/or testing of the tool, and an analysis of the benefits as well as the deficiencies both.
Organizational Trust Index (OTI)

In reviewing the literature on trust, Nyhan and Marlowe (1997) found limited rigorous assessment tools that focused on the dichotomization of trust in both the organization and the leader. The previous instruments referenced associating mistrust and focusing solely on the reliability of written or spoken word as it related to trust. In their opinion, without a valid instrument, scholars and professionals would not be able to make further progress on the topic. Thus, the Organizational Trust Instrument (OTI) was created to measure the assumed difference between organization and supervisor when assessing an individual’s trust.

Nyhan and Marlowe (1997) created the original factors while also engaging their consulting colleagues to conduct a review based on their expertise. The first set of 12 items included eight in which measured trust in supervisor and the remaining four assessing trust in the organization utilizing a seven-item Likert scale ranging from 1=nearly zero to 7=near 100%. They used this initial scale to validate the instrument with four pre-test groups including students and employees from various blue-collar organizations as a mediating factor for measuring job stress and satisfaction. Included in the assessment were reliability, exploratory, and validity tests that found support to separate the two factors within the instrument into supervisor and organizational trust. Secondarily, Nyhan, and Marlowe (1997) studied a larger sample of students, government, and service employees to further validate the reliability of the instrument.

The OTI has been used to find support that organizations that are servant led and leaders who display servant leadership factors mediate both leader and organizational trust at a higher level than other leadership styles (Joseph & Winston, 2005). One of the
key benefits of this instrument is that it aligns with the study’s focus to measure mediating factors and the impact they have on organizational outcomes. The seminal work on the OTI was as a mediating assessment to measure outcomes such as culture and affective commitment while exhibiting “both internal homogeneity and consistency, temporal reliability, and discriminant and convergent validity” (Nyhan & Marlowe, 1997, p. 627). Further studies utilized the instrument to showcase trust as a mediator to organizational outcomes such as organizational justice (Aryee, Budhwar, & Chen, 2002)

More recently, Trivers (2009) utilized OTI as a mediating factor between servant leadership, as measured by the same SLQ (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006) instrument used in this study, and employee engagement as a behavior in the form of OCBs.

**Three Factor Fit Analysis Instrument**

Organizational and job fit indices have long been a focal point of occupational research pinpointing both Person-Organization (P-O) and Person-Job (P-J) as a key two-factor concept. Research has found support linking success to an employee’s fit with their job and organization by utilizing measures of P-O and P-J to measure the mediating impact (Kristof-Brown, 2000). While this may be the case, Cable and DeRue (2002) highlighted a key fit component that was missing in the previous research as it related to Needs-Supplies (N-S) fit. They defined N-S as the pairing of rewards to an employees’ contribution within an organization, whether monetary payment and benefits or public praise for a job well-done. With this in mind, the pair created a three-factor fit instrument to supplement the previous two-factor analyses that were previously utilized in research.

It was the conceptualization that employees stay in a job not only because of their fit with the organization or tasks they are asked to complete, but also because of the
rewards that they receive in return for their service that drove Cable and DeRue to create the three-factor instrument. For this reason, measuring P-O, Demands-Abilities (D-A), and N-S separately was key in constructing a reliable instrument to measure fit. They began by integrating four items for each of the three components and conducted a pilot study with MBA graduate students. The results of the pilot study provided feedback that only three items were needed for each fit factor measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. These nine items were then assessed through two additional studies that found support for the separation of P-J fit into D-A and N-S to effectively measure an individual’s fit along with “a high level of convergent and discriminant validity” (p. 881).

The benefit of using a three-factor instrument to measure the mediating effect fit has on employee engagement as a result of servant leadership includes not only the reliability and validity of the instrument, but also the consistency in the use in measuring outcomes. In the seminal work by Cable and DeRue (2002), they distinguished the measures into supplementary and complementary factors. As a supplementary measure, P-O fit highlights the congruence between an individual and organization’s values while the complementary fit of both D-A and N-S emphasize the balance between the task and person to make the situation whole (p. 879).
Empirical support was found linking P-O fit to perceived organizational support, turnover decisions, and OCB. As it related to the complementary factors, N-S was associated with commitment, job, and career satisfaction while D-A did not show significant relationship between future job performance and advancement. This instrument proved very beneficial in pinpointing the mediating factors that fit have between servant leadership and employee engagement as a state of being.

**Theory Development**

Although research has found support of the positive effect leadership factors have on engagement, (Tims, Bakker, & Xanthopoulou, 2011; Walumbwa, Hartnell, & Oke, 2010), that myopic focus leaves out more relevant mediating relationships that link leadership factors to employee engagement. Recent literature found supporting evidence for both perceived leadership effectiveness and meeting psychological needs of employees as mediating factors related to both transformational and servant leadership (van Dierendonck, et al., 2013). Therefore, this study included a review of alternative mediating factors that have yet to be the focal point of servant leadership research including trust and perceived fit as it relates to the state of engagement. More specifically, organizational as well as direct-leader trust is coupled with P-O and P-J fit which is broken into two categories: Need-Supply (N-S) and Demand-Ability (D-A) fit.

Furthermore, the reason organizations are focusing more on employee engagement is likely due to the relationship that is being described between engagement and bottom line performance. Numerous studies have supported the theory that improved employee engagement not only drives job satisfaction, but also job performance as an interrelated component of the relationship (Dalal, et al., 2012; Liden, Wayne, Zhao, &
Henderson, 2008). With mounting qualitative and quantitative research to support these correlated relationships, there remains a gap in understanding of which leadership style and mediating factors best facilitate employee engagement leading to the aforementioned improved job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job performance. The following hypotheses suggest significant relationships that build upon the hypothetical model presented at the end of this chapter in Figure 1.

A cursory review of the literature would lead one to hypothesize that all leadership styles, in one way or another, would have a positive impact on the engagement of an employee. The conceptualization that servant leadership factors more effectively drive the state of employee engagement is based on qualitative and quantitative research that established empirical support for servant leadership as a distinct style positively impacting employee attitudes. In fact, research by Liden, et al., (2008) showcased servant leadership having a distinct impact “on employee outcomes after controlling for other leadership behaviors, such as transformational leadership and leader-member exchange” (Hu & Liden, 2011). More specifically, Ehrhart’s (2004) research highlighted a 5% positive variance in employee commitment related to servant leadership over other leadership styles.

It is the differences in the way in which servant leaders interact with their followers versus alternate leadership styles that is the basis of [H1]. “Servant leaders transcend self-interest, express genuine care and concern, and act in the best interest of their followers, thereby creating a social context in which followers reciprocate by engaging in extrarole prosocial behavior” (Walumbwa, Hartnell, & Oke, 2010, p. 519). It has been shown in previous research, as well as this current study, that servant leadership
positively impacts the engagement of employees because of the focus on the person and how he or she fits into the organization, versus focusing on the organization to determine how they can make individuals meet. Servant leaders demonstrate care for the individual first, which then engages employees through the aforementioned servant leadership factors. In addition to uniquely identifying the impact of servant leadership compared to LMX and transformational styles, further research found support for the impact servant leadership has above and beyond authentic leadership (Politis, 2013).

While servant leadership has proven effective in driving various employee attitudes, the gap in the literature lies in the focus on employee engagement as a state of being. This study posits a significant relationship linking the state of employee engagement to servant leadership factors of altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Specifically, it is hypothesized that there is a more positive relationship from the factors of altruistic calling and organizational stewardship as it relates to engagement. These factors create more community within an individual and work group, therefore enhancing the engagement of individual employees and teams.

**Hypothesis 1 [H1]:** Servant leadership factors have a significant relationship with employee engagement.
Trust is a foundational component of any relationship whether to an individual or an organization, which makes it imperative to define the distinct impact that various leadership styles have on building that foundation. Trust is not unique to servant leaders as authentic and LMX leadership styles also emphasize trust throughout literature and practice. The difference lies in the focus the servant leader puts on helping the individual achieve their goals versus the primary organizational goal focus by most all other styles (Goh & Zhen-Jie, 2014).

Trust is built when there is a perception among employees that fairness and equal treatment are a part of the team and culture. It is the trust in the leader that is the critical component of overall trust because of the intimate interaction employees have with their direct leader versus that of the organization as a whole. For example, a front-line supervisor that has daily touch points with an employee focusing on how he or she can help improve his or her skills would hypothetically build a higher level of trust than a leader that simply shares team performance and organizational goals, as would be the case for transformational leaders.

Therefore, [H2] is primarily focused on organizational stewardship and emotional healing as the primary servant leadership factors driving trust within individuals (Walumbwa, Hartnell, & Oke, 2010). When leaders take time to create community within a team versus every individual looking out for oneself, employees hypothetically would feel that they are a part of an organization that cares about them as people. On top of that, a stronger relationship of trust would be assumed when employees can count on their leader to help them heal emotionally.
Servant leaders show this by empathizing with their employees’ minor failures at work to the major tragedies in their personal life that flow over into the organization. The foundational tenant of servant leadership is to build trust, and from there employees understand that there is a culture for them to be engaged not only in their work, but with their leader and organizations.

In fact, recent studies showcase support of increased levels of OCBs highlighting the fact that “employees have higher trust in leader and higher organizational commitment level when their leaders practices servant leadership style of management” (Goh & Zhen-Jie, 2014, p. 23). A positive relationship can be hypothesized that when a leader is able to connect and assist a struggling employee through both personal and professional issues, that emotional healing is present. It is this connection that servant leaders are able to make that will create an environment of trust for both the leader’s relationship which in turn helps to drive organizational trust.

**Hypothesis 2 [H2]:** *Servant leadership factors have a significant relationship with both organizational and leader trust.*

It is the leaders’ ability to create the environment, instill a common vision and connect employees’ tasks to the overall goals that drive various fit perceptions. Often, the goal of the leader is to help an individual complete a widget or task to add to the value of the organization; but it is when leaders are able to connect the needs of the organization with the abilities of employees that create a culture where proper rewards can drive fit. “Moreover, leaders occupy a powerful position in terms of influencing followers’ assessments of their job” (Chi & Pan, 2011, p. 45).
Servant leaders help employees associate fit perceptions through persuasive mapping and the wisdom that provides them a thorough understanding of their employees. This ability allows servant leaders to not only connect a vision, but to align skills to tasks. Additionally, the servant leader’s focus on the individual helps them to customize rewards for achievement. It creates an environment where servant leaders can build upon the “influence of individuals’ perception of value congruence within the organization to their own PO fit assessments” (Leung & Chaturvedi, 2011, p. 392).

The reason that the three fit perceptions have been specifically separated for this study is that research has proven the distinct nature in which each has an impact on employees (Cable & DeRue, 2002). Persuasive mapping is a key factor in improving employees’ fit perceptions as servant leaders “are more capable of reading followers’ needs, providing relevant information to enhance followers’ perceived importance of their work, and using positive verbal cues to activate higher order needs of followers” (Chi & Pan, 2011, p. 45). While the majority of previous studies have focused on transformational leadership as a driver of fit perceptions, in the case of servant leadership, persuasive mapping is thought to have a positive impact on employee fit. Servant leaders utilize persuasive mapping to integrate their employees’ understanding of how they fit and make a difference within the organization, whereby driving overall fit.

**Hypothesis 3 [H3]: Leaders that exhibit servant leadership factors have a significant relationship on perceived fit including Person-Organization (P-O), Needs-Supply (N-S), and Demands-Ability (D-A).**
While trust may be a foundational component of servant leadership, more evident in the research is the relational impact trust has on outcomes such as employee attitudes, OCBs, and engagement. In fact, empirical evidence has shown that there is a significant relationship between trust as a mediating relationship between leadership and outcomes such as OCB versus the direct effect of leadership factors on the same outcomes (Trivers, 2009). It is the feeling of belonging that servant leaders create which proves useful for permeating the silos between leaders and followers by focusing their support for the follower’s well-being versus solely that of the organizational goals.

While leaders may create the environment for trust to be apparent, it is the individual feeling of trust that engages the employee with the team and organization. Feelings of trust mediate the relationship between leadership behavior and behavioral engagement such that feelings of trust are the psychological state between leader behavior and behavioral engagement. Thus, leaders create trust in followers, and it is the trust followers experience that enables behavioral engagement. (Macey & Schneider, 208, p. 22)

It is evident that trust has been the focal point of a myriad of studies, but the majority of the focus has been on the engagement behaviors instead of the state of being. The servant leadership factor of emotional healing is the key to unlocking the relationship between trust and engagement as a state of being.

**Hypothesis 4 [H4]:** *Organizational and direct-leader trust has a significant relationship on employee engagement.*
In order for employees to feel like they are adding value to an organization, they need to not only understand the organizational goals, but how they specifically fit into that strategic plan. It is the perception of fit that has the power to engage employees with both their task and the organization as a whole.

Psychologically, it appears to follow that when people have certain kinds of work to do and when they work under certain kinds of managers, they feel engaged and behave in adaptive and constructive ways that produce results that were perhaps unexpected. (Macey & Schneider, 2008, p. 22)

When employees feel that they are in the right role to contribute to the organization’s goals, they give discretionary effort. For instance, Walumbwa, et al., (2010) provide evidence for leaders who are able to meet the physical and psychological needs of followers that in turn drive employee engagement.

Additional studies have shown the impact that N-S fit has as a mediator in that “job resources have been found to be positively associated with work engagement, leading to better performance” (van den Berg, Bakker, & ten Cate, 2013, p. 266). Also, when an employee feels that his or her skills are not only being effectively utilized but also properly recognized and compensated, D-A fit is raised leading to a more engaged employee. Lastly, P-J and P-O fit have been studied and proven a positive moderator between leadership factors and employee engagement (Chi & Pan, 2011). While fit has been found to be a positive mediating factor to attitudinal outcomes, limited is the research linking these fit factors to the state of engagement (Leung & Chaturvedi, 2011).

**Hypothesis 5 [H5]:** Perceived fit has a significant relationship on employee engagement.
Literature Review Summary

As outlined in Chapter 2, both servant leadership and employee engagement are relatively new constructs when compared with their leadership and employee attitude counterparts. This chapter provided an overview of servant leadership factors including the seminal work by Greenleaf (1970) and recent work by leaders and scholars alike to highlight the factors as well as differentiate from other leadership styles. In addition, the literature related to employee engagement helped to distinguish this attitudinal measure from job involvement and satisfaction in an attempt to measure the state of an employee’s being. Lastly, a review of several mediating factors helped to pinpoint various antecedents to organizational outcomes such as employee engagement, including trust, and fit perceptions. It was this review that helped to identify the gaps in the current literature that this study’s theoretical premise was built upon leading to the aforementioned hypotheses.

Furthermore, the rigorous review of the assessment tools related to servant leadership, trust, perceived fit, and employee engagement laid the foundation for the following Chapter 3 research design. The review highlighted concrete academic work as it related to the topics, but there were four assessments that stood out in stature to support this study’s goals. For servant leadership, the 23-point Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ) constructed by Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) will be utilized to conduct both a self-assessment and leader-assessment for servant leader factors as the independent variable.

Additionally, the nine-point Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) tool created by Schaufeli and Bakker (2006) was utilized to measure the dependent employee engagement variables. Also, the mediating factors of trust and perceived fit were
measured utilizing the 12-point Organizational Trust Index (OTI) by Nyhan and Marlowe (1997) as well as the three-factor fit analyses by Cable and DeRue (2002). Utilizing these assessments helped to lay the foundation for the methodology found in the following chapter focused on research design, survey channel, participant selection, sampling procedure, and a synopsis related to the data analysis.

*Figure 1.* The impact that servant leadership and the mediating factors of trust and fit have on employee engagement. This figure illustrates the hypothetical research model showcasing the significant relationships between the dependent and independent variables via the mediating factors of fit and trust.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In order to add value to the servant leadership literature, a sound research methodology was necessary to gather, analyze, and interpret the data. The following chapter outlines the approach that was utilized in order to best analyze the impact that servant leadership factors have on employee engagement as a state of dedication, absorption, and vigor via the mediating factors of trust and perceived fit. The subsequent information outlines the research design, assesses the survey channel, provides an overview of participant selection, summarizes the sampling procedure, and includes a synopsis related to the data analysis.

By addressing these points, this chapter helps build the framework on how this study answered specific research questions to add value to the servant leadership, trust, fit, and employee engagement literature:

Question 1: What is the relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement?

Question 2: What servant leadership factors are most strongly related to mediating factors of trust and perceived fit?

Question 3: Might trust and perceived fit mediate the relationship between employee engagement and servant leadership?

By utilizing the following methodology, the study was able to address the aforementioned hypothetical model (Figure 1) as it relates to the direct impact servant leader factors have on employee engagement as a state of being as well the indirect impact via mediating factors of fit and trust.
Research Design

In order to effectively study the relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement, the study employed a series of surveys. To increase the validity of the study, there was a deep dive analysis of various survey assessment tools completed in the literature review to determine the most viable options as they related to servant leadership and employee engagement. From that review, three surveys were selected from two sources: Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova’s (2006) short Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) and Barbuto and Wheeler’s (2006) Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ) self-assessment for leaders and the SLQ assessment for followers.

With the advent of web-based surveys in the early part of the 1990s, research has evolved from face-to-face, paper, and phone-based interviewing, to online channels. While electronic surveys may not have the random selection ability and response rate as the aforementioned methods, it still is a relevant channel for social science research. Particularly for this study, the web-based survey techniques were geared towards a targeted population of employees via email invite versus a random sampling, self-selection, or intercept-type survey on the web (Andrews, Nonnecke, & Preece, 2003).

Servant Leadership Instrumentation

As outlined previously in the literature review, the Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ) was built on the foundation of in-depth research analysis by Barbuto and Wheeler (2006). Their work allowed them to pinpoint 11 characteristics that were pertinent to servant leadership of which they then engaged five advanced doctoral students and six leadership faculty to review the research questions that had been associated with the original 11 characteristics. After gaining consensus on the
categorization of the questions related to each characteristic, Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) conducted an initial test to assess the relevance of the SLQ in practice. After analyzing the feedback from 80 elected community members and 388 followers, the instrument characteristics were reduced to the five that were most unique in capturing the essence of a servant leader including: altruistic calling, listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, growth, and community building (p. 304). From these five attributes, Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) constructed both a self-assessment for leaders and a corresponding follower leader-assessment.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLQ Survey Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment Item</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Altruistic Calling</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This person puts my best interests ahead of his/her own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This person does everything he/she can to serve me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This person sacrifices his/her own interests to meet my needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This person goes above and beyond the call of duty to meet my needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional Healing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This person is one I would turn to if I had a personal trauma.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This person is good at helping me with my emotional issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This person is talented at helping me heal emotionally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This person is one that could help me mend my hard feelings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
### Assessment Item

#### Wisdom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This person seems to be alert to what’s happening.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This person is good at anticipating the consequences of decisions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This person has great awareness of what is going on.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This person seems to be in touch with what’s happening.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This person seems to know what is going to happen.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Persuasive Mapping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This person offers compelling reasons to get me to do things.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This person encourages me to dream “big dreams” about the organization.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This person is very persuasive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This person is good at convincing me to do things.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This person is gifted when it comes to persuading me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Organizational Stewardship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This person believes that the organization needs to play a moral role in society.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This person believes that our organizations needs to function as a community.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This person sees the organization for its potential to contribute to society.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This person encourages me to have a community spirit in the workplace.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This person is preparing the organization to make a positive difference in the future.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants were asked to answer the questions by utilizing a five-point Likert scale in measuring servant leadership items. The response scale ranged from 0 – not at all to 4 – frequently, if not always.

Additionally, the SLQ was selected for reasons beyond the internal validity that was assessed by the authors. For one, it is a multi-dimensional construct that considers both the perceptions of the leader and follower and in creating his own assessment construct, Rothbard (2001, p. 679) highlighted “the need to measure employee engagement as a multi-dimensional construct” versus just a single attribute. Also, the SLQ assessment has been referenced in academia as a tool that can help drive future servant leadership research (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Hunter, et al., 2013). Moreover, the assessment tool has been used in studies that found supporting evidence when comparing servant leadership to employee attitudinal measures (Jenkins & Stewart, 2008; Liden, et al., 2008).

**Employee Engagement Instrumentation**

The short Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) that was selected for use in this research was constructed based on a collective group of studies by Schaufeli, Bakker, and others through the early part of the 2000s. Originally a 24-item assessment, rigorous research and comprehensive testing allowed the team to identify seven unreliable statements, eventually leading to a more streamlined tool that could be used in academic research and industry. Schaufeli and Bakker (2006) did comparative inverse-testing with the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) survey created by Maslach, Leither, and Jackson (1986).
The nine items are made up of three questions each related to vigor, dedication, and absorption. Participants were asked to answer the questions by utilizing a seven-point Likert scale in measuring employee engagement as a state of vigor, dedication, and absorption. The response scale ranged from 0 – never to 6 – always, every day.

Table 5

UWES Survey Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vigor</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At my work, I feel bursting with energy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dedication</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am enthusiastic about my job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My job inspires me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am proud of the work that I do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Absorption</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel happy when I am working intensely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am immersed in my work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get carried away when I am working.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It was important to select a scale that aligned with the study’s goals of measuring the impact servant leaders have on the state of employee engagement. By defining the type of engagement which is being measured helps to overcome the diluted nature in which some studies attempt to combine the trait, behavioral, and state of being (Macey & Schneider, 2008). In addition, this particular scale has been used throughout academic research, most recently by Dalal, et al. (2012) who conducted an employee engagement analysis utilizing three different engagement scales. When they performed a follow-up analysis of their study using only the UWES scale, they found the same results whereas the other assessment tools contained problematic issues that had to be removed. Furthermore, Alarcon, and Edwards (2010) utilized the UWES scale when assessing employee engagement as it relates to satisfaction and turnover intent because of the internal consistencies that the tool provided.

Trust Instrumentation

The Organizational Trust Index (OTI) that was selected for use in this research was constructed based on an expansive literature review and collaboration by Nyhan and Marlowe (1997). The 12-item instrument went through rigorous research during the initial stages and has since then been utilized as a reliable tool to assess both organizational and leadership trust. Participants were asked to answer the questions by utilizing a seven-point Likert scale in measuring both direct-leader and organizational trust. The response scale ranged from 1 – nearly zero to 7 – near 100%.
It was vital to pinpoint an instrument that aligned with the study’s goals of measuring the impact certain factors have on mediating the relationship between servant leadership resulting in employee engagement. By measuring both direct-leader and organizational trust, a detailed analysis was able to be conducted to determine the antecedents of engagement. Furthermore, this instrument has been used throughout academic research to measure the mediating impact trust has on various outcomes (Aryee, Budhwar, & Chen, 2002; Trivers, 2009).

Table 6

Organizational Trust Index Survey Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Trust</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My level of confidence that this organization will treat me fairly is __________.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The level of trust between supervisors and workers in this organization is __________.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The level of trust among the people I work with on a regular basis is __________.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The degree to which we can depend on each other in this organization is __________.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
## Assessment Item

### Leader Trust

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My level of confidence that my direct leader is technically competent at the critical elements of his/her job is __________.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My level of confidence that my direct leader will make well thought out decisions about his/her job is __________.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My level of confidence that my direct leader will follow through on assignments is __________.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My level of confidence that my direct leader has an acceptable level of understanding of his/her job is __________.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My level of confidence that my direct leader will be able to do his/her job in an acceptable manner is __________.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When my direct leader tells me something, my level of confidence that I can rely on what they tell me is __________.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My confidence in my direct leader to do the job without causing other problems is __________.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My level of confidence that my direct leader will think through what he/she is doing on the job is __________.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perceived Fit Instrumentation

Being able to measure the perceived fit of followers to both the job and organization was a key component in defining the mediating impact fit has on engagement. The three-factor assessment created by Cable and DeRue (2002) was selected because of the rigorous analysis the pair did to ensure the reliability and validity of the instrument. After beginning originally with a 12-item assessment, the duo utilized pilot testing to end up with a nine item assessment comprised of three factors of each of the following: Person-Organization (P-O) fit, Needs-Supplies (N-S) fit, and Demand-Abilities (D-A) fit.

Table 7

*Three-Factor Fit Survey Items*

**Assessment Item**

**P-O Fit**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The things that I value in life are very similar to the things that my organization values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My personal values match my organization’s values and culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My organization’s values and culture provide a good fit with the things that I value in life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**N-S Fit**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is a good fit between what my job offers me and what I am looking for in a job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The attributes that I look for in a job are fulfilled very well by my present job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The job I currently hold gives me just about everything that I want from a job.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
Assessment Item

**D-A Fit**

| The match is very good between the demands of my job and my personal skills. |
| My abilities and training are a good fit with the requirements of my job. |
| My personal abilities and education provide a good match with the demands that my job places on me. |

Participants were asked to answer the questions by utilizing a five-point Likert scale in measuring P-O, N-S, and D-A fit. The response scale ranged from 1 – *strongly disagree* to 5 – *strongly agree*. In addition to the importance of trust as a mediating factor, identifying an instrument such as Cable and DeRue’s (2002) helped to provide the study with a reliable tool to measure the relationship between servant leadership factors and employee engagement. In distinguishing between P-O, N-S, and D-A, a more rigorous analysis was possible to find data to support the hypotheses.

**Instrument Reliability**

A key factor in selecting these instruments was the focus by the authors to ensure that each was a reliable measure of their respective assessments. The independent variable measured by the SLQ showcased reliability coefficients ranging from .82 to .92. The mediating factor of trust as measured by the OTI instrument showcased a reliability coefficient of .95 (Nyhan & Marlowe, 1997) while Cable and DeRue’s (2002) three-factor fit indices ranged from .84 to .93.
Lastly, the dependent engagement variable from the UWES instrument has measured .80 to .90 (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Considering the social science research, a reliability coefficient (Cronbach’s a) of greater than or equal to 0.70 is a satisfactory level (Streiner, 2003), which means each of these scales exceeds the standards for this research.

**Likert Data**

Since the preceding assessment tools utilize Likert-scale data, it would be beneficial to outline the significance and differences between Likert-type and Likert-scale data within the methodology. Likert-type data is reflective of questions where the researcher is making no attempt to combine the data. Conversely, Likert-scale data allows the researcher to be able to aggregate responses to quantitatively analyze the factors outlined in the assessment (Boone & Boone, 2012, p. 2). Additionally, there are differences in the way in which researchers should analyze the two types of Likert data.

This study utilized Likert-type solely to gather nominal scale demographic data to include gender, location, age, and ethnicity which will be used to find categories of respondents. The bulk of the study though, was comprised of Likert-scale interval data related to both the SLQ, OTI, three-factor fit, and UWES assessment tools which will allow for aggregated responses. This type of interval data lends to using the mean to find central tendencies, standard deviations to pinpoint the variability, Pearson’s $r$ to pinpoint relationships along with additional statistical measures such as regression analysis, t-test, and analysis of variance, most commonly referred to as ANOVA (Boone & Boone, 2012, p. 3).
Sampling Procedure

This study utilized a convenience sample drawn from individuals within one organization that will in turn, reduce the data collection phase of the research. In order to increase the statistical significance of the study, participants from four locations throughout the United States were solicited to partake in the survey including locations in the Southeast, Midwest, and Northeast. Employees and leaders throughout the administrative business units were targeted as these areas comprise the largest sample opportunity. This target audience afforded the research a cross-sectional sample to include call center representatives, claims examiners, policy maintenance specialists, and billing generalists. Moreover, the administrative business units have large employee to leader ratios of an average of 15:1 whereas other professional areas throughout the organization would limit aggregated group responses rates with employee to leader ratios of less than 5:1.

Furthermore, the data collection sequence was aimed to overcome common method variance by spacing the assessments over the course of two weeks. In week one, the SLQ follower-assessment was sent to employees to assess the servant leader factors of their direct supervisor in addition to the SLQ self-assessment sent online to leaders throughout administration to complete based on their perceptions of their own factors as the independent variable. In week two, the employee engagement UWES assessment was sent to the same set of employees from week one to identify their state of employee engagement along with the trust and fit assessment items.
Figure 2. Online survey assessment timeline for participants. This figure outlines the timelines utilized for the survey administration.

To address the hypotheses of the study, the servant leader factors were outlined as the independent ($x$) variable which included: altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Organizational and leader trust (Nyhan & Marlowe, 1997) along with P-O, N-A, and D-S (Cable & DeRue, 2002) were considered the mediating ($m$) variables. As a result, employee engagement as a state of vigor, dedication, and absorption was considered the dependent ($y$) variables (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2006).

**Participants and Sample Size**

The participants of this study were front-line employees and leaders from a Fortune 500 insurance organization headquartered in the Southeast. For this study, 140 supervisors were targeted for the SLQ self-assessment and 1,500 employees for the SLQ leader-assessment, Organizational Trust Index, the three-factor fit assessment, and UWES engagement survey. Participants from four geographic locations were also targeted with two locations in the Southeast, one in the Midwest, and another in the Northeast.
Ethical Considerations

In addition to approval from the organization’s business unit and human resource executives, this exempt study has received approval from Creighton University’s Institutional Review Board on February 10, 2014 (IRB# 14-16692). Furthermore, the email communication to potential participants outlined their rights and disclosures in agreeing to take the survey (outlined in appendix A). Also, to ensure the participant’s anonymity, once the responses were gathered, the responses were anonymously coded to aggregate the group-level data for analysis.

Summary

This chapter presented an overview of the research methodology that was necessary to gather, analyze, and interpret the data in order to evaluate the relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement through the mediating factors of trust and fit. The chapter started with an outline of the approach that was utilized in order to best analyze the impact of the theoretical model and research questions that were presented followed by the research design, the selected survey channel, review of the participant selection, defining the sampling procedure, and synopsis related to the data analysis. By addressing these points, this chapter helped to build the framework on how this study answered specific research questions to add value to the servant leadership, trust, fit, and employee engagement literature.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

Chapter Four is a presentation of the findings related to this quantitative survey-based study that explored the multi-level relationships between servant leadership factors and employee engagement as a state of being through the mediating factors of trust and fit. The purpose of this quantitative study was to identify the relationship that servant leaders have on employee engagement as a state of vigor, dedication, and absorption via mediating factors of trust and perceived fit within a Fortune 500 insurance organization. This chapter will include a summary of the descriptive statistics and detailed findings of the data related to the aforementioned hypotheses. The final piece includes a review of the hypothetical model as it relates to the servant leadership factors and drivers of employee engagement including the mediating factors of trust and fit.

The study addressed multiple research questions, specifically the three that: [Q1] what is the relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement? [Q2] what servant leadership factors are most strongly related to mediating factors of trust and perceived fit? [Q3] might trust and perceived fit mediate the relationship between employee engagement and servant leadership? Each of these questions has sub-components included in the following analysis to address servant leadership factors, the state of engagement, trust, and fit.
Description of the Sample

Based on the convenience sampling, 1,500 surveys were distributed to front-line employees and 140 self-assessments to organizational leaders via email. The table below provides a detailed outline related to the responses received from the participants:

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Number Sent</th>
<th>Viewed</th>
<th>Started</th>
<th>Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leader Self-Assessment</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>54 (39%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Leader Assessment</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>417 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement Assessment</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>312 (21%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented in Table 8, 233 participants completed both the leader and engagement assessments which comprise the study’s final sample size for analysis. This equates to approximately a 15.5% combined response rate for the employee assessments from the total sample size. Although the SLQ (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006) was utilized because it integrated a leader self-assessment and follower-assessment, the final sample size only included the follower-assessment. The sample that resulted from the combination of the self-assessment and follower-assessment significantly reduced the employee sample size and was therefore excluded from inclusion in further analysis. This exclusion has a limited impact on the study’s findings in that the spacing of the employee leader-assessment and engagement assessment was over the course of two weeks to minimize common method variance. Also, the sample size was robust enough to represent the organization’s population.
Descriptive Statistics

There were 233 participants included in the final analysis for this study, of which each individual was guaranteed anonymity in their responses as a volunteer participant. As outlined in Table 8, there was a significant portion of the participants that may have begun but never completed the survey. The 233 was a result of the usable surveys from those completing both the leader and engagement surveys. In addition to the main survey questions, there were a total of five additional demographic and descriptive questions that were asked of each participant to include their gender, age, location, education level, and ethnicity. The results of those responses are outlined in Table 9.

Table 9

*Descriptive Statistic Overview*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Albany, NY</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Columbia, SC</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Columbus, GA</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Omaha, NE</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>&lt;20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60 and over</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Associate’s Degree</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doctoral Degree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caucasian/White</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Native American/American Indian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>~0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While the response rate for females may seem abnormally high, the organization as a whole employs 70% females for comparison. Additionally, various tools were used to test the descriptive statistics of the assessments myriad of factors. Table 10 outlines the results of the descriptive statistics for the servant leadership, trust, fit, and employee engagement factors.

Table 10

 Factor Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
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<td>Organizational</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Needs-Supply (N-S)</td>
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<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Demands-Ability (D-A)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Absorption</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Common Method Variance

As mentioned previously, the survey distribution method was set over a two-week period in order to overcome the perceived common method variance associated with self-ratings by employees.

Research Question/ Hypothesis Testing

The following is a detailed analysis as it relates to the study’s core model which hypothesized that servant leadership factors drive employee engagement through the mediating factors of trust and fit. In order to test the hypothesis, three research questions and their corresponding original hypotheses were created and subsequently analyzed below.

The first research question [Q1] framed the first hypothesis that servant leadership factors have a positive relationship on measures of employee engagement as a state of being [H1]. The data suggests a statistically significant correlation between servant leadership factors and the state of employee engagement $r (233) = .38, p < .05$ as shown in the Figure 3 scatter-plot. Moreover, there is a relationship between the individual factors of servant leadership impacting employee’s engagement: altruistic calling $r (233) = .37, p < .05$, emotional healing $r (233) = .28, p < .05$, wisdom $r (233) = .37, p < .05$, persuasive mapping $r (233) = .32, p < .05$, and organizational commitment $r (233) = .40, p < .05$. The correlation coefficients were positive and significant for each of the servant leadership factors as it related to the overall state of employee engagement which suggests that there is a meaningful relationship between each servant leadership factor and employee engagement.
Figure 3. Responses to the impact servant leadership factors have on employee engagement. This figure illustrates the relationship between servant leadership factors and employee engagement.

Although each servant leadership factor was significantly related to overall engagement, each factor within the employee engagement assessment did not have as strong of a correlation, most notably a significantly lower correlation between servant leadership factors and absorption \( r (233) = .27, p < .05 \). The other factors of vigor \( r (233) = .39, p < .05 \), and dedication \( r (233) = .34, p < .05 \) did show a significant positive correlation to servant leadership factors. While significant in measure, the direct correlation between servant leadership and employee engagement does not account for the impact of the mediating factors and relative weighted impact of outside factors not included in this study such as leader effectiveness and other motivational factors.

In addressing the second research question [Q2], relationships between servant leadership factors and the mediating factors of trust and fit were hypothesized. The data suggests the most significant correlation between servant leadership factors and overall
trust $r_{233} = .76, p < .05$ as shown in the Figure 4 scatter-plot to support [H2]. While servant leadership factors did have a positive correlation to organizational trust $r_{233} = .52, p < .05$, more significant is the correlation between servant leadership factors and direct leader trust $r_{233} = .77, p < .05$.

![Figure 4](image)

*Figure 4.* Responses on the impact servant leadership factors have on overall trust. This figure illustrates the relationship between servant leadership factors and trust.

There is also a relationship between the collective servant leadership factors and the mediating factors of overall perceived fit $r_{233} = .41, p < .05$. The correlation coefficients were positive and significant for servant leadership as it related to each of the three fit factors: person-organization (P-O) fit $r_{233} = .37, p < .05$, needs-supply (N-S) $r_{233} = .35, p < .05$ and demands-abilities (D-A) $r_{233} = .31, p < .05$. The coefficients showed positive relationships for each of the collective servant leadership factors as it related to both overall fit and each fit factor. Most notably, P-O and N-S showcased that increases in servant leadership corresponds with increases in fit which supports [H3].
Figure 5. Responses on the impact servant leadership factors have on overall fit. This figure illustrates the relationship between servant leadership factors and fit.

Lastly, the study’s final question [Q3] hypothesized that trust and perceived fit had a positive impact on employee engagement as mediating factors of servant leadership. The correlation was found to be positive for the impact that overall trust has on employee engagement $r (233) = .466, p < .05$ as showcased in Figure 6 which supports [H4].
Figure 6. Responses on the impact trust factors have on employee engagement. This figure illustrates the relationship between trust factors have and employee engagement.

The correlation coefficients were positive and significant for each of the trust factors as they related to the overall state of employee engagement indicating increases in leader and organizational trust corresponds with significant increases in employee’s state of engagement. Again, absorption showcased the weakest positive correlation of the engagement factors $r (233) = .33, p < .05$ while the other factors of vigor ($r (233) = .45, p < .05$) and dedication ($r (233) = .46, p < .05$) highlighted a significant positive correlation to overall trust.

The study’s final question [Q3] was supported by the most significant relationship of employee engagement between the mediating factors of fit $r (233) = .70, p < .05$ as showcased in Figure 7 to support [H5]. More specifically, each of the fit factors had a statistically significant relationship to engagement (P-O) fit $r (233) = .57, p < .05$, needs-supply (N-S) $r (233) = .59, p < .05$, and demands-abilities (D-A) $r (233) = .57, p < .05$. 
Figure 7. Responses on the impact fit has on employee engagement. This figure illustrates the relationship between fit factors have and employee engagement.

**Exploratory Analysis**

Exploratory analysis findings highlighted comparative response results for male (n = 33) and female (n = 200) related to each variable as seen below in Figure 8. The only factor that showcased a measurable difference in responses was overall trust.

Figure 8. Gender response comparison. This figure illustrates the gender response comparisons for all assessment variables.
Summary

This chapter outlined the study results which included a brief review of the methodology, descriptive statistics related to the sample, an overview of the data analysis procedures, and detailed findings of the data related to the study’s hypothetical model. Based on the quantitative data related to the 233 responses that were analyzed, each of the study’s three questions and corresponding hypotheses found empirical data to support a positive correlation. While there was a significant positive correlation directly between servant leader factors and employee engagement as a state of being, the study supported the hypothesis that servant leadership drives the mediating factors of trust and fit which in turn are more highly correlated to the state of an employee’s engagement.

Table 11

Factor Correlation Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>SL</th>
<th>EE</th>
<th>Trust</th>
<th>Fit</th>
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<td>SL</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.76</td>
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<td>EE</td>
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<td>Trust</td>
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<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fit</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As hypothesized, servant leadership factors were more strongly correlated to factors of trust and fit than direct engagement, which supported the original hypotheses and model showcased in Figure 9. Important to note was the fact that the correlation between servant leadership and employee engagement does not account for the impact of the mediating factors and relative weighted impact of outside factors not included in this study. Also noted is a lower correlation of the engagement factor of absorption as it related to all other variables it was paired with.

Figure 9. The impact that servant leadership and the mediating factors of trust and fit have on employee engagement. This figure illustrates the hypothetical research model showcasing the significant relationships between the dependent and independent variables via the mediating factors of fit and trust which includes the correlation values.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Introduction

The main purpose of this study was to use quantitative data to explore the relationship between servant leadership factors and the relationship they have with employee engagement via mediating factors of trust and fit. This chapter includes a discussion and summary of the conclusions regarding the hypothetical model and research questions that were originally proposed. Furthermore, presented is an overview of the implications and application of the model into practice that outlines a call to action for human resource and business unit leadership to train servant leadership factors as a way to build trust and improve employee engagement. Lastly, there is a summary of the practical recommendations, future research endorsements as well as the limitations and delimitations of the study.

At the core of this study were the hypotheses that servant leadership factors were positive antecedents of trust and fit which in turn played a mediating role in driving employee engagement. While the servant leadership literature has found empirical evidence to support the fact that servant leaders drive trust, improve engagement behaviors as well as bottom line performance, the current literature does not have a representative study aimed at defining the state of engagement as a result of servant leaders via trust and fit. This study was designed to fill that gap by focusing on this relationship between servant leadership factors and the state of engagement via trust and fit.
There were three research questions that framed the original hypotheses that were tested as a part of the overall hypothetical model to analyze the correlation between servant leadership \((x)\) and employee engagement \((y)\) via trust \((m)\), and fit \((m)\). To begin, there were tests between the direct relationships of servant leadership to employee engagement engrained in the research question. [Q1] what is the relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement? [Q2] what servant leadership factors are most strongly related to mediating factors of trust and perceived fit? [Q3] might trust and perceived fit mediate the relationship between employee engagement and servant leadership?

Positive correlations were found for each of the research questions in support of the overall hypothetical model. A significant correlation was found between servant leadership and employee engagement as a state of being, \([H1] = .38\). Servant leadership was also found correlated to trust \([H2] = .76\), and overall fit \([H3] = .41\), which both are statistically significant. While servant leadership revealed a statistically significant relationship with employee engagement directly, the mediating factors showcased a stronger relationship with employee engagement than did servant leadership through trust \([H4] = .47\) and fit \([H5] = .70\), all which were highlighted in Table 11.

**Conclusions**

The foundation of this study was built on the hypotheses that servant leadership factors would drive employee engagement as a state of being, which found significant correlative support \((r = .38)\). While the overall correlation was significant, the most correlated engagement factor when paired with servant leadership was vigor \((r = .39)\) followed by dedication \((r = .34)\), and, lastly, absorption, which although correlated, was
significantly below the other engagement factors \((r = .27)\). Although there is no current study to compare the correlative effect of servant leadership factors on engagement, a similar study comparing transformational leadership and the same measure of engagement showcased a positive correlation of \(r = .14\), which while supportive, not as strong as the current study nor as significant as the correlation that the authors found related to the mediating factors similarly for this study (Tims, Bakker, & Xanthopoulou, 2011).

As Greenleaf (1977) alluded to “This must come first. Trust is first. Nothing will move until trust is firm” (p. 101). This study found support in accordance with this statement due to a strong high correlation between servant leadership factors and overall trust at \(r = .76\). More significant was the positive correlation between servant leadership and direct leader trust \((r = .77)\) when compared with the correlation between servant leadership and organizational trust \((r = .52)\). These results are comparative to those of Rezaei, Salehi, Shafiei, and Sabet (2012) that found a significant correlation between servant leadership and organizational trust \((r = .59)\) using the same trust index. Trivers (1999) also found a correlative relationship between servant leadership and trust which aligns with this study’s findings \((r = .77)\). Additional studies highlighted similar correlation values between servant leadership and trust to include recent literature from Goh and Zhen-Jie (2014) which, while they used different trust scales, still found correlative significance of \(r = .56\) and \(r = .60\) for affect-based trust and cognitive-based trust of the direct leader respectively.
Likewise, the positive correlation between servant leadership factors and fit were also proven significant \( (r = .41) \). While it was not as significant a correlation as trust, the analysis proved again that as a mediating factor to engagement, fit plays a significant role. Moreover, while servant leadership factors showed a significant correlation to overall fit, it also represented a significant relationship to Person-Organization (P-O) fit \( (r = .37) \), Needs-Supply (N-S) fit \( (r = .35) \), and Demands-Ability (D-A) fit \( (r = .31) \).

After analyzing the impact of the antecedent factors of servant leadership on the mediating factors of fit and trust, it was necessary to identify the impact that fit and trust had on engagement. As hypothesized, both trust and fit had a higher positive correlation on employee engagement than servant leader factors solely. Trust had a highly significant correlation to driving engagement at \( r = .47 \) while a more significant relationship was seen between fit and engagement \( r = .70 \).

The high correlation between trust and engagement \( (r = .47) \) was broken down into direct leader correlation to engagement \( (r = .38) \) and the impact that organizational trust has engagement \( (r = .51) \). Moreover, fit had three factors that were highly correlated with employee engagement including P-O fit \( (r = .57) \), N-S fit \( (r = .59) \), and D-A fit \( (r = .57) \). The mediating factors of trust and fit showed a significant relationship on employees’ state of engagement.

Initially, the hypothesis \([H1]\) was that servant leadership drives employee engagement, and although true to some extent, that focus alone is myopic. Through the literature review, it was discovered that while servant leaders do positively impact engagement, more prominent is the impact that servant leaders have on mediating factors which then correlate to a positive state of engagement \([H4, H5]\). Therefore, trust and fit
were integrated into this study as the mediating factors between servant leadership and employee engagement. It is the mediating factor of trust that continues to prove the foundational element of servant leadership as found in this study and others (Goh & Zhen-Jie, 2014; Rezaei, et al., 2012).

Furthermore, the study found a significant relationship between fit factors and engagement. This suggests that as employee’s needs are met, when their values align with the organization, and when the skills needed for the job match their abilities, engagement rises. Servant leaders drive P-O fit by committing to organizational stewardship while a focus on emotional healing of the employee drives the N-S fit of an individual. A servant leader’s ability in persuasive mapping and his or her wisdom helps them to focus on the individual versus the organization, which lends to a great ability to find the right fit for an individual’s skills into a position to enhance his or her D-A fit.

**Implications and Application**

The results of this study add a theoretical and practical contribution to the literature for servant leadership, trust, perceived fit, and employee engagement. The results imply that servant leadership factors do have a positive impact on employees’ trust, their fit within the organization, and ultimately their overall state of engagement. Since research has proven the significance of engagement on a myriad of success measures such as productivity and retention, it is important for leaders to note what behaviors to engage with in order to build trust and create an environment where employees’ perception of fit drives their engagement. Leaders should take note of the research that shows building a foundation of trust within each employee has on a multitude of factors, not the least of which is engagement.
More specifically, organizations should take note that if they want to increase the engagement of their employees; they need to consider cultivating servant leaders through targeted training and reinforcement. While this study focused on the impact these factors may have on front-line supervisors, servant leadership training should also be considered for mid-level and executive management. The importance of the leader-employee relationship can be enhanced by servant leaders that answer an altruistic calling, facilitate emotional healing, share wisdom, utilize persuasive mapping, and engage in organizational stewardship with their team members (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Leaders with these qualities find opportunities to ensure employees are the right fit for the organization and position while at the same time, and more importantly, create a culture of trust within individuals and the organization. Servant leadership is a supportive style that this study has found significant relationships to link overall trust and perceived fit to employees’ engagement as a state of being.

**Limitations and Delimitations of the Study**

Although a large sample size was analyzed for this study across the United States, a convenience sample was utilized with a high response rate concentrated in the Southeast drawn from individuals within one organization. That, in turn, created a limitation for the generalizability of the results to the market as a whole. Furthermore, this particular organization has a high concentration of female employees (70%) that led to a non-representative gender sampling of the general marketplace. Also, while this study utilized a multi-level leadership assessment tool in the SQL, the self-assessment comparative findings were not utilized because it would have significantly limited the sample size of the employee responses.
The delimitations of this study began with the design to focus solely on servant leadership factors and employee engagement as a state of being. Other factors that were considered were additional leadership styles and their impact on Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCBs) or other engagement factors. These were not included in order to focus the study and limit the length of the surveys as requested by the organization that was engaged in the study. Additional design delimitations that were decided were the focus solely on the business industry to better understand the practical implications on a sector of employees. Lastly, the design of the study focused on relationships without a causal design linking the independent, dependent, and mediating variables.

**Future Research**

The data associated with this study supported the original research questions and hypotheses that sought to explore the relationship between servant leadership factors and employee engagement via organizational trust and perceived fit. Both trust and fit were found to mediate the relationship between servant leadership factors and employee engagement as a state of being with highly correlated research. Although support was found for the original hypothetical model, future research is recommended to validate and expand the literature on the subject.
While the sample size was significant within this study, it was focused on a single organization. By expanding the study to a cross-section of industries, research could develop a more clear understanding of the mediating relationships of trust and fit. Integrating the not-for profit, academic, corporate, and even governmental organizations would provide a cross-industry look into the impact of servant leadership as a style to explain the effectiveness of leaders.

Furthermore, the focus of this study was on servant leadership alone. Future studies could integrate numerous leadership styles within the study to determine the most effective style with the same data set. Moreover, additional mediating factors could be integrated such as positive psychological impact, leader effectiveness, and other motivational factors to highlight the impact mediating factors have on engagement on behalf of various leadership styles.

Also, while this study focused on employee engagement as a state of being, other studies have and can continue to integrate employee engagement traits and behaviors, such as organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB). Although this study found support for the model where servant leadership factors drove mediating factors of fit and trust which positively impacted engagement, future studies could expand by measuring performance indicators such as productivity, quality, and retention.
Conclusion

This study found supporting evidence for a significant relationship between servant leadership factors and the impact they have on mediating factors of trust and fit to drive employee engagement. By focusing on a Fortune 500 insurance organization with locations in the Southeast, Northeast, and Midwest, this study found both academic and practical application of the results. These findings not only expanded the servant leadership and employee engagement academic literature, but at the same time, it highlighted practical implications for organizations as they strive to engage their workforce. In spite of the limitations, this study provided positive results and a framework for organizations to strengthen their leaders and workforce. Human resource managers and organizational executives can use these findings to focus training on building servant leadership factors for their leaders if they wish to build trust within individuals and expand employees’ perception of fit within the organization that will drive engagement.
References


van den Berg, B. A. M, Bakker, A. B., & ten Cate, T. J. (2013). Key factors in work engagement and job motivation of teaching faculty at a university medical centre. Perspectives of medical education, 2, 264-275.


Appendix A

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval Letter
IRB# 14-16992

Creighton University

February 10, 2014

Nathan Daniel Klein
Interdisciplinary Leadership Program
Department of Graduate Studies

RE:  
IRB #: 14-16992
TITLE: The Impact Servant Leaders Have On Employee Engagement

Dear Mr. Klein,

Thank you for submitting the above mentioned proposal to the Institutional Review Board office for review. This project has been determined to be exempt from Federal Policy for Protection of Human Subjects, as per 45CFR46.101 (b) 2. This IRB approval is for a 3 year period. The following documents were received, reviewed, and approved:

2. Study Design (No Date)
3. Participant letter

Continued approval is conditional upon your compliance with the following requirements:

1. Compliance with the Creighton University IRB policies and procedures
2. Problems must be reported using the Reporting Form for Reportable New Information. Problems requiring report can be found in the IRB Policy 134 “Reportable New Information”
3. All protocol amendments and changes to approved research must be submitted to the IRB and not be implemented until approved by the IRB. Please use the modification form when submitting changes to protocol or consent documents.
4. This study cannot continue after the expiration date, which is February 9, 2017.
5. You are required to submit a renewal/termination prior to this date. If you wish to continue the project, the renewal must be in the IRB office on week prior to the expiration date.

If you should have questions during the course of this project, please call the IRB office at (402) 280-2126 and one of the administrators will assist you, or you may email the office at irb@creighton.edu.

Social Behavioral · Institutional Review Board · 2830 California Plaza · Omaha, Nebraska 68178
Phone: 402.280.2126 · Fax: 402.280.4786 · Email: irb@creighton.edu
Sincerely,

[Signature]

Christine Scheuring, B.S.
Administrator, Institutional Review Board

The Creighton University is fully accredited by the Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protections Program, Inc. ® (AAHRPP)

Creighton University has an Assurance on file with the Department of Health and Human Services: Assurance Identification No. FWA 00001078, the expiration date: July 6, 2016
IRB Registration Numbers: IRB #1 Biomedical IRB # IRB00000155 (Expiration July 13, 2015); IRB #2 Social Behavioral IRB # IRB00000155 (Expiration July 13, 2015)

Creighton University has an Assurance on file with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Assurance Identification No. FWA00001078, the expiration date July 6, 2016
IRB Registration Numbers: Registration/Identification No.IRB00000155
Appendix B

Leadership and Employee Engagement Assessment Surveys: Leader and Employee Consent Email Communication

From: Nathan Klein (NKlein@aflac.com)
Sent: _______________
To: Survey Participants
Subject: Action Requested: Leadership Assessment Survey
Dear Aflac Employee,

   My name is Nathan Klein and while I am an employee of Aflac Group, I am also working on my doctoral studies at Creighton University in Omaha, NE. As a part of my requirements, I am in the process of completing a dissertation research project which is the purpose of this email.

   I am inviting you to take part in a two-part research study to examine the relationship between leadership factors and employee engagement. This research will help identify opportunities for organizations to pinpoint leadership factors that help to drive employee engagement. By completing this survey, you are giving your consent for the researcher to include your responses in his/her data analysis. Your participation in this initial survey will take approximately 7-10 minutes and is strictly voluntary, as such, there will be no compensation for completion. There are no risks in participating and you may choose not to participate without fear of penalty or any negative consequences.

   You are encouraged to answer the survey on your own private time and in a confidential setting. Individual responses will be anonymous. No individually identifiable information will be disclosed or published, and all results will be presented as aggregate, summary data. A follow-up survey on employee engagement will be sent in two weeks which you are encouraged to complete as well.
If you wish, you may request a copy of the results of this research study by writing to the researcher, Nathan Klein, 554 Kaymin Hill Court, Lexington, SC, 29073. If you have questions about your rights, please visit here or contact Creighton University’s Institutional Review Board at 402-280-2126.

I have read and understand the information explaining the purpose of this research and my rights and responsibilities as a participant. Completion of the online survey defines my consent to participate in this research study, according to the terms and conditions outlined above.

www.surveylinkhere.com
From: Nathan Klein (NKlein@aflac.com)
Sent: _______________
To: Survey Participants
Subject: Action Requested: Self-Assessment Survey
Dear Aflac Leader,

My name is Nathan Klein and while I am an employee of Aflac Group, I am also working on my doctoral studies at Creighton University in Omaha, NE. As a part of my requirements, I am in the process of completing a dissertation research project which is the purpose of this email.

I am inviting you to take part in a two-part research study to examine the relationship between leadership factors and employee engagement. This research will help identify opportunities for organizations to pinpoint leadership factors that help to drive employee engagement. By completing this survey, you are giving your consent for me to include your responses in the data analysis. Your participation in this self-assessment will take approximately 7-10 minutes and is strictly voluntary, as such, there will be no compensation for completion. There are no risks in participating and you may choose not to participate without fear of penalty or any negative consequences.

You are encouraged to answer the survey on your own private time and in a confidential setting. Individual responses will be anonymous. No individually identifiable information will be disclosed or published, and all results will be presented as aggregate, summary data.

If you wish, you may request a copy of the results of this research study by contacting me, Nathan Klein, 554 Kaymin Hill Court, Lexington, SC, 29073. If you have questions about your rights, please visit here or contact Creighton University’s Institutional Review Board at 402-280-2126.
I have read and understand the information explaining the purpose of this research and my rights and responsibilities as a participant. Completion of the online survey defines my consent to participate in this research study, according to the terms and conditions outlined above.

www.surveylinkhere.com
From: Nathan Klein (NKlein@aflac.com)
Sent: _______________
To: Survey Participants
Subject: Action Requested: Employee Engagement Survey
Dear Aflac Employee,

My name is Nathan Klein and while I am an employee of Aflac Group, I am also working on my doctoral studies at Creighton University in Omaha, NE. As a part of my requirements, I am in the process of completing a dissertation research project which is the purpose of this email.

I am inviting you to take part in the second portion of this two-part research study to examine the relationship between leadership factors and employee engagement. This research will help identify opportunities for organizations to pinpoint leadership factors that help to drive employee engagement. By completing this survey, you are giving your consent for the researcher to include your responses in his/her data analysis. Your participation in this follow-up survey will take approximately 7-10 minutes and is strictly voluntary, as such, there will be no compensation for completion. There are no risks in participating and you may choose not to participate without fear of penalty or any negative consequences.

You are encouraged to answer the survey on your own private time and in a confidential setting. Individual responses will be anonymous. No individually identifiable information will be disclosed or published, and all results will be presented as aggregate, summary data.

If you wish, you may request a copy of the results of this research study by writing to the researcher, Nathan Klein, 554 Kaymin Hill Court, Lexington, SC, 29073.
If you have questions about your rights, please visit here or contact Creighton University’s Institutional Review Board at 402-280-2126.

I have read and understand the information explaining the purpose of this research and my rights and responsibilities as a participant. Completion of the online survey defines my consent to participate in this research study, according to the terms and conditions outlined above.

www.surveylinkhere.com
Appendix C

Permission to Use Instruments

Sent: Sunday, January 12, 2014, 7:30 AM
Subject: Request to use UWES instrument for dissertation research

I am a Doctoral candidate at Creighton University in Omaha, NE. I would like to formally request your permission to use the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Short Version) referenced in your article entitled “The Measurement of Work Engagement with a Short Questionnaire: A Cross-National Study” by Schaufeli and Bakker (2006). This assessment tool will be used for academic and educational purposes only in a study that I have proposed for my dissertation research.

The purpose of this quantitative study is to identify the impact that servant leaders have on employee engagement as a state of vigor, dedication, and absorption within a Fortune 500 insurance organization. I have copied my dissertation proposal for your review which includes a review of numerous engagement and servant leadership assessment tools, including yours.

If you have further clarification that is needed, I would gladly answer any and all questions. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Submitted respectfully,
Sent: Sunday, January 12, 2014, 1:03 PM  
Subject: re: Request to use UWES instrument for dissertation research

You Have my permission, good luck!

Verstuurd vanaf mijn iPad

Sent: Sunday, January 12, 2014, 8:40 AM  
Subject: re: Request to use UWES instrument for dissertation research

As indicated on my website, the UWES can be used freely for non-commercial, academic purposes like your project.

With kind regards,
I am a Doctoral candidate at Creighton University in Omaha, NE. I would like to formally request your permission to use the Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ) referenced in your article entitled “Scale development and construct clarification of servant leadership” by Barbuto and Wheeler (2006). This assessment tool will be used for academic and educational purposes only in a study that I have proposed for my dissertation research. The purpose of this quantitative study is to identify the impact that servant leaders have on employee engagement as a state of vigor, dedication, and absorption within a Fortune 500 insurance organization. I have copied my dissertation proposal for your review which includes a review of numerous engagement and servant leadership assessment tools, including yours. If you have further clarification that is needed, I would gladly answer any and all questions. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Submitted respectfully,

Sent: Sunday, January 12, 2014, 10:54 AM
Subject: re: Formal request to utilize the SLQ for academic research

Nathan, you have my permission to use the SLQ for your doctoral research.
I am a Doctoral candidate at Creighton University in Omaha, NE. I would like to formally request your permission to use the Organizational Trust Inventory which appeared in your article entitled “Development and Psychometric Properties of the Organizational Trust Inventory” by Nyhan and Marlowe in Evaluation Review (1997) and see if you have that and or other related articles you might be able to share as I have seen the beneficial use in other dissertations. This scale will be used for academic and educational purposes in a study that I have proposed for my dissertation research.

My dissertation title is “The impact Servant Leaders have on Employee Engagement” where I am looking to make the link between the leadership style and the engagement state of employees.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Nate:

Yes, good luck.
Sent: Sunday, February 2, 2014, 7:44AM  
Subject: Request to Organizational/Job Fit instrument for dissertation research

I am a Doctoral candidate at Creighton University in Omaha, NE. I would like to formally request your permission to use the Organizational/Job Fit instrument/questions referenced in your article entitled “The Convergent and Discriminant Validity of Subjective Fit Perceptions” by Cable and DeRue (2002). This assessment tool reviewing P-O, D-A, and N-S fit will be used for academic and educational purposes only in a study that I have proposed for my dissertation research. The purpose of this quantitative study is to identify the impact that servant leaders have on employee engagement as a state of vigor, dedication, and absorption within a Fortune 500 insurance organization. I have included the draft of my theoretical model for your review.

If you have further clarification that is needed, I would gladly answer any and all questions. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Submitted respectfully,

Sent: Sunday, February 2, 2014, 10:24AM  
Subject: re: Request to Organizational/Job Fit instrument for dissertation research

Hi

Of course you can use it, thanks for letting us know.
Appendix D

Bill of Rights for Research Participants

As a participant in a research study, you have the right:

1. To have enough time to decide whether or not to be in the research study, and to make that decision without any pressure from the people who are conducting the research.

2. To refuse to be in the study at all, or to stop participating at any time after you begin the study.

3. To be told what the study is trying to find out, what will happen to you, and what you will be asked to do if you are in the study.

4. To be told about the reasonably foreseeable risks of being in the study.

5. To be told about the possible benefits of being in the study.

6. To be told whether there are any costs associated with being in the study and whether you will be compensated for participating in the study.

7. To be told who will have access to information collected about you and how your confidentiality will be protected.

8. To be told whom to contact with questions about the research, about research-related injury, and about your rights as a research subject.

9. If the study involves treatment or therapy:
   a. To be told about the other non-research treatment choices you have.
   b. To be told where treatment is available should you have a research-related injury, and who will pay for research-related treatment.