Leading by Serving: Redefining the Roles of Leaders and Followers in Today's Workplace

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Leadership scholars and laypeople alike agree that there is a clear distinction between leaders and followers. However, the attributes and competencies used to describe effective leaders and followers are surprisingly similar, which raises questions about the extent to which science has truly improved our understanding of what it takes to lead. We argue that the similarity between leader and follower competencies is at least partially the result of recent organizational trends, such as the flattening of organizational structures and the growing proportion of high-skilled workers (Deitz & Orr, 2006). Subsequently, those in follower roles are increasingly expected to be able and willing to take on responsibilities traditionally assigned to leaders (e.g., be engaged, innovative, and self-managed problem-solvers).

So, what is the role of leaders in today's workplace? We suggest that the most effective leaders are those who focus greater attention on a

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superordinate leadership role—which involves higher-order leadership responsibilities that are more strategic than operational. Central to this superordinate role is empowering, developing, and obtaining key resources for followers in carrying out day-to-day responsibilities, as well as coordinating followers' efforts in order to more effectively and efficiently achieve organizational level goals. In essence, we propose that today's most effective leaders are those who, above all else, "serve" followers' ability to directly contribute to organizational effectiveness.

In the following sections, we begin by reviewing evidence that highlights the similarity that exists between leader and follower competency models within the literature. This is followed by describing the historical factors that contributed to this similarity and proposing a revised conceptualization of leadership—one that places greater emphasis on the superordinate role to align with recent economic and workforce trends. Next, we propose the idea of servant leadership as a viable starting point for understanding the superordinate leadership role, summarize existing servant leader competency models in order to identify a core set of servant leadership competencies, and compare and contrast this model with existing followership and traditional leadership models. Finally, we highlight work contexts and organizational characteristics in which the superordinate/servant leadership role may have the greatest utility.

History of Similarities Between Leader and Follower Competencies

Given the goals of this chapter, it may seem counterintuitive to begin our discussion with a focus on followership. However, the similarity between existing followership and leadership competency models and the need to revisit the role of leadership in today's workplace will become convincingly clear from a description of the rise of followership research. It has long been believed that not only do leaders play an important role in the work of their followers but also that followers play a vital role in effective leadership, both through the attributes they possess and their relations with leaders (Chaleff, 2009). However, early follower research was largely

constrained to a "follower-centric" approach to studying leadership. That is, followers served as subject matter experts, providing their perspective on leadership and, in particular, the characteristics associated with effective leaders (Meindl, 1995). It was not until recently that the study of "followership"—which focuses on understanding the role of followers in the leadership process and identifying the competencies of effective followers (Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera, & McGregor, 2010; Sy, 2010; Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe, & Carsten, 2014)—began to emerge within the organizational literature.

The growing interest in the study of followership represents an important advancement in understanding the leadership process and leader-follower relations. However, this has also created a bit of a dilemma. Although consensus over an exact set of leader attributes or competencies has long eluded the organizational sciences (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002; see also Tett, Guterman, Bleier, & Murphy, 2000), several key constructs have appeared with great consistency across a variety of existing taxonomies, including: adaptability (Bartram, 2005; Bass, 1990; Stogdill, 1948), achievement orientation and drive (Bartram, 2005; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Yukl, 1998), integrity (Bass, 1990; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Yukl & Van Fleet, 1992), and positivity and emotional stability (Bartram, 2005; Bass, 1990; Yukl, 1998). Many of these and similar attributes, such as accountability, exercising control, independent problem-solving, initiative, self-management, and a willingness to stand up for beliefs (Chaleff, 2009; Kelley, 2008; Carsten et al., 2010), have also been frequently used to describe followers. In fact, leaders' perceptions of effective followers appear to be quite similar to followers' perceptions of effective leaders, as demonstrated by the empirical evidence for implicit leadership and followership theories. Table 1 depicts the correspondence between prototypes associated with implicit theories of leadership (Offermann, Kennedy, & Wirtz, 1994) and followership (Sy, 2010). The table shows that effective leaders (as perceived by followers) and followers (as perceived by leaders) are both viewed as hard-working, energetic, and competent, while ineffective leaders and followers are both viewed as domineering. The commonality in attributes and competencies associated with effective leadership and followership

Table 1 Implicit leadership theory and implicit followership theory prototypes

Leader prototypes[a]	Follower prototypes[b]
Dedication: hard-working, motivated, dedicated	*Industry*: hard-working, productive, goes above and beyond
Dynamism: e.g., energetic, charismatic, bold	*Enthusiasm*: excited, outgoing, happy
Sensitivity: e.g., helpful, warm, sympathetic	N/A
N/A	*Good citizen*: loyal, reliable, team player
	Follower anti-prototypes
Intelligence: e.g., knowledgeable, educated, intellectual	*Incompetence*: uneducated, slow, inexperienced
Masculinity: masculine, male	N/A
Leader anti-prototype	
Tyranny: e.g., pushy, domineering, selfish	*Insubordination*: arrogant, rude, bad-tempered
N/A	*Conformity*: easily influenced, follows trends, soft-spoken

[a]Adapted from "Implicit Leadership Theories: Content, Structure, and Generalizability", by L. R. Offermann, J. K. Kennedy, and P. W. Wirtz, 1994, *Leadership Quarterly, 5*, 43–58

[b]Adapted from "What Do You Think of Followers? Examining the Content, Structure, and Consequences of Implicit Follower Theories", by T. Sy, 2010, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 113*, 73–84

has led some to question whether followers are essential to effective leadership or actually "leaders in disguise" (cf. Kelley, 2008).

Failure to clearly distinguish between effective leaders and followers has long been an issue within the scholarly literature, albeit one that has received little attention to date. In support of the "leaders in disguise" argument, it may be that effective employees are effective in any role, whether it be that of a leader or a follower. It would certainly be hard to argue that many of today's effective leaders were not once effective followers. However, relying solely on the "leaders in disguise" or generalized "effective employee" argument goes against both scientific and lay understandings of the very idea of leadership. Thus, although there is likely a core set of competencies important to the many work roles that many effective followers successfully transition into leadership roles, key distinctions between leader and follower competencies also exist.

In order to better distinguish between leadership and followership roles and competencies, we must understand the historical context in which our current knowledge of each is embedded. While the foundation for how we think about followership has only recently begun to develop, the foundation for how we think about leadership became largely solidified during the middle of the last century. Importantly, there have been dramatic changes to the way organizations operate between these two periods of time.

One key change has been to the way organizations are structured, which has been in response to recent economic factors (e.g., globalization, rapidly changing technology, economic volatility). No longer are organizations able to rely on bureaucratic and hierarchical structures (Doyle, 1990). To remain competitive, organizations are becoming flatter and leaner. As evidence of flattening and increasingly lean organizational structures, major reductions in layers of management among three-fourths of US Fortune 1000 firms (Lawler, Mohrman, & Ledford, 1992) and significant manager layoffs (Doyle, 1990) were reported during the 1980s. Such changes represent organizations' shift toward becoming "high-performance work organizations", which Kling (1995) suggested involves increased reliance upon "the creativity, ingenuity, and problem-solving ability of their workers" (p. 29). Consequently, expectations for followers to take on greater responsibility and work more autonomously have increased greatly (Howell & Mendez, 2008).

Another key change has been to employment relations. There have been changes in psychological contracts between employers and employees in recent decades (Hiltrop, 1995), as employment relations are decreasingly characterized as long term and stable (Cappelli, 2000). Consequently, employees have become more self-reliant and motivated to take control of their own professional development through greater formal education and a wider range of work experiences. Thus, followers are not only expected to take on greater responsibility but are also likely more capable of doing so (Schein, 1996).

Given the shifts in both what is expected of followers and what followers are capable of, it is no wonder why there has been a growing interest in the study of followership. For these same reasons, it should not be surprising that contemporary characterizations of effective followers so

closely mirror those of effective leaders, especially those based on organizational concepts that are becoming increasingly dated. The similarity between leader and follower competencies would appear to pose a major problem in terms of organizations' ability to function efficiently. If we accept that effective leaders and followers share many of the same competencies, we might also assume that this is because they are carrying out the same or highly similar work responsibilities. Duplicating responsibilities is, to some extent, often an issue among highly adaptive and highly flexible organizations. However, we believe this to be less of a practical issue than an issue of our scholarly understanding of the distinction between leadership and followership roles having fallen behind the practice. Moreover, we do not believe that it is the fledgling scholarly work in the area of followership that is flawed, but instead our understanding of the leadership role that may be becoming increasingly outdated. Thus, the key to distinguishing between leadership and followership roles, as well as identifying the leader and follower competencies corresponding with those roles, will likely require us to reexamine the leadership role in today's workplace. While we maintain that leaders serve many roles in today's workplace, our position is that effective leadership today requires greater emphasis on the superordinate role. Moreover, we believe that the concept of servant leadership provides a strong starting point for understanding this superordinate role.

Servant Leadership as a Means of Characterizing the Superordinate Leadership Role

For many, the idea of servant leadership is an oxymoron (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002), as the primary intent of the servant leader is not to lead, in the traditional sense of the term, but to serve (Greenleaf, 1977). This transcendence of self-interest is the defining feature of servant leadership (van Dierendonck, 2011). As such, servant leadership emphasizes the well-being of the organization through growing and developing followers within the organization as well as bridging sustained positive relationships with stakeholders within and outside the organization.

Increased interest in servant leadership is indicative of the growing importance being placed on ethical organizational behavior, social responsibility, and employee well-being across globalized societies (Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008; Sendjaya, Sarros, & Santora, 2008; van Dierendonck, 2011). We agree that the tenets underlying servant leadership provide a "breath of fresh air" in response to an era of global business in which a series of ethical breaches have grabbed media headlines and consumer attention. However, history has repeatedly demonstrated that public interest in how organizations are run waxes and wanes, eliciting responsive action from industry only when necessary.

We contend that servant leadership has far greater potential to impact practice than has been achieved thus far, namely through considering the operational benefits implementing this style of leadership poses to organizations. We also contend that these practical, as opposed to more idealistic, benefits have been largely underemphasized within the servant leadership literature, which has limited its appeal to organizations. By characterizing servant leadership as representative of the superordinate leadership role, the operational benefits of servant leadership to the organization become more evident, and the concept will, deservedly, become more entrenched within science and practice. Importantly, as described above, we suggest that aspects of superordinate leadership have naturally manifested in practice due to recent changes in how work gets done, but that science has largely failed to keep up with practice in this regard (Parris & Peachy, 2013). However, we do not believe the operational benefits of servant leadership, when viewed as reflective of the superordinate leadership role, to be particularly novel. Instead, we suggest that this connection has simply not been previously made explicit.

The organizational benefits of the operational role of servant leaders may be best exampled through Lawrence and Lorsch's (1967) famous depiction of the effects of differentiation and integration on economic performance among firms in the chemical processing industry. The highest performing firms in that study were not necessarily those with the most capable managers—that is, those tasked with monitoring progress toward organizational objectives—or most charismatic or transformative leaders within specific organizational units (i.e., research, production, and sales). Instead, it was the firms with liaisons who most effectively

coordinated efforts across organizational units—that is, those tasked with supplying unit members with the information and resources necessary for unit members to apply their expertise in the ways that most effectively met organizational objectives.

The depiction of the units studied by Lawrence and Lorsch within these chemical processing firms captures the role of followers in today's workplace well. The units were made up of individuals possessing considerable knowledge and skill in their area of expertise, who were highly capable of self-management, and who were responsible for directly contributing to organizational success through the products or services rendered by their units. However, unit members' expertise was highly specialized, limiting their awareness of knowledge being produced in, resources available in or required by, and problems faced in other organizational units. Although today's followers are progressively being expected to apply their expertise to directly contribute to organizational effectiveness, it may be unrealistic to expect them to also be intimately aware of the work being conducted across the other units within the organization, especially when organizations are highly complex or organizational units are geographically dispersed. This gap highlights the need for superordinate leadership, which is depicted by the liaisons in Lawrence and Lorsch's study. Just as the liaisons focused their efforts on aligning goals, distributing unit-specific information, and allocating appropriate resources across units within the chemical processing firms, leaders are needed in a growing number of today's organizations to fulfill the same superordinate role.

There are many contemporary leadership theories that implicitly capture various aspects of the superordinate leadership role, for example, authentic leadership, charismatic leadership, ethical leadership, transactional leadership, and transformational leadership. Servant leadership has been compared to each. Although many leadership theories contain components that overlap with those of servant leadership, numerous theorists have drawn important, albeit somewhat nuanced, distinctions between them and servant leadership, suggesting that they are complementary but not redundant. These contrasts among leadership theories have been discussed at length elsewhere (Sendjaya et al., 2008; van Dierendonck, 2011), and we will not attempt to reproduce those theoretical analyses in any detail here. Instead, we will simply point out that while other

contemporary theories tend to put the organization first, there is broad agreement that servant leaders' primary interest belongs to their followers.

This distinction alone places servant leadership at the forefront of what the superordinate leadership role entails. Returning to the idea of high-performance work organizations' increased expectations for followers to contribute to organizational success (Kling, 1995), the key to the super-ordinate leadership role is enabling followers to do so—just as Lawrence and Lorsch's liaisons did, as documented by greater firm performance. Whereas leadership that puts the organization first may actually inhibit adaptive and creative contributions from followers, leadership that puts followers first actively facilitates new and innovative contributions from followers. In line with this idea, servant leadership proponents contend that sustained organizational success is best achieved when the people who contribute to organizational success are given the resources and opportunity to develop the skills to do so (Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004), an idea that has been well established in the extant literature using the resource-based view of the firm to study human capital (Barney, 1991).

This new conceptualization of leadership, which incorporates a super-ordinate role of coordination and support, appears to provide a natural fit with the idea of servant leadership, wherein the leader provides followers with the tangible and intangible resources to thrive as autonomous and creative contributors. We argue that highlighting these operational benefits of servant leadership as representing the superordinate leadership role provide practical utility. However, the core issue of this chapter—differentiating between leader and follower competencies—has not yet been resolved.

Servant Leadership Competencies

Distinguishing between the superordinate leadership role of servant leaders and traditional leadership roles increasingly assumed by followers in today's world of work should create a clearer distinction between leader and follower competencies. Specifically, we argue that, in light of the emerging similarity between competencies associated with effective leadership and followership, the competencies that have traditionally been used to describe effective leaders are no longer sufficient in today's work-

place. A number of attempts have been made to define the competency dimensions of servant leaders (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Liden et al., 2008; Russell & Stone, 2002; Sendjaya et al., 2008; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Similar to existing taxonomies put forth regarding traditional leader and follower competencies, there is variation in the dimensions of servant leader competencies proposed. We reviewed six taxonomies, identifying a parsimonious model of six servant leadership competency dimensions for which there is the greatest consensus. We have labeled these competency dimensions as *service, empowerment, creating vision and direction, stewardship, integrity, and interpersonal appreciation*. The results of our review highlighting these six competency dimensions are presented in Table 2. We provide a detailed description of each competency dimension below.

Service

The ability and willingness to pursue opportunities to serve others and put others first are thought to be at the core of servant leadership (Russell & Stone, 2002) and the superordinate leadership role. Effective leadership increasingly entails acceptance that followers are capable of making vital contributions to organizational goals and that ensuring followers have the tools and resources to do so is an important driver of organization success. Service is inherently a relational attribute of servant leadership, as effective service involves both listening to and understanding followers' needs and communicating to followers that their needs and achievement are important (Liden et al., 2008). However, the most important aspect of service is surely behavioral, in that only through consistently demonstrating behaviors that put follower needs first will those in superordinate leadership roles be effective (Sendjaya et al., 2008).

Empowerment

A core component of the original conceptualization of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970), which also emphasizes leader-follower relations, is empowering followers. Leaders who empower followers motivate,

Table 2 Overview of taxonomies of servant leader attributes

Dimension	Barbuto and Wheeler (2006)	Wong and Page (2003)	Russell and Stone (2002)	Liden et al. (2008)	van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011)	Sendjaya et al. (2008)
Service	Altruistic calling	Caring for others developing others servanthood	Service	Putting subordinates first	NA	Voluntary subordination
Empowerment	NA	Empowering others modeling	Empowerment modeling	Helping subordinates grow and succeed/ conceptual skills/ empowering	Empowering and developing people	Transforming influence
Integrity	NA	Integrity	Honesty integrity	Behaving ethically	Authenticity	Responsible morality
Creating vision and direction	Persuasive mapping/ wisdom	Visioning goal setting leading	Vision	NA	Providing direction	NA
Stewardship	Organizational stewardship	NA	NA	Creating value for the community	Stewardship	NA
Interpersonal appreciation	NA	NA	Appreciation of others	NA	Interpersonal acceptance	Covenantal relationship

Note: Additional competencies within authors' taxonomies include: Emotional Healing (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Liden et al., 2008); Humility (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011); Authentic Self (Sendjaya et al., 2008); Shared Decision Making (Wong & Page, 2003); Team Building (Wong & Page, 2003); Pioneering (Russell & Stone, 2002); Transcendental Spirituality (Sendjaya et al., 2008)

facilitate, and instill in followers a sense of self-efficacy to effectively complete tasks and achieve challenging goals (Liden et al., 2008; Russell & Stone, 2002; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). However, empowerment is not limited to motivational aspects. An important aspect of successfully empowering followers is a commitment to followers' personal and professional development (e.g., Liden et al., 2008; Sendjaya et al., 2008; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Servant leadership is believed to be contagious (Graham, 1991), and leaders' ability to develop followers plays a particularly important role in establishing a climate of servitude, as followers become increasingly capable of modeling similar behaviors and empowering others (Russell & Stone, 2002; Sendjaya et al., 2008).

Creating Vision and Direction

The third component that appears consistently across servant leadership taxonomies is what we refer to here as creating vision and direction. Vision and direction are components not unique to servant leadership (Bass, 1985). Nonetheless, the ability to effectively execute and manage vision and direction aspects is arguably the most important component of the superordinate leadership role. While the two components discussed thus far, service and empowerment, rely heavily upon relations with individual followers, vision and direction take on a broader relational role. On the one hand, the ability to effectively articulate a vision that guides long-term strategic goals and short-term performance expectations throughout the organization creates a clear path that allows empowered followers to effectively make operational and strategic decisions to align with that vision (Russell & Stone, 2002). On the other hand, direction represents the coordinator role of superordinate leadership. While servant leaders must effectively serve followers—that is, ensure followers have the tools and resources to meet expectations—superordinate leaders must also coordinate the efforts of multiple individual followers and teams toward broader organizational goals (van Dierendonck, 2011). As part of this responsibility, servant leaders must

be aware of not only individual needs but also effective ways of distributing resources in a manner that maximizes individual's and teams' progress toward higher-order organizational goals.

Stewardship

This component represents taking responsibility for the organization, its behavior and culture, and its impact on the broader community or society (Liden et al., 2008; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Stewardship is certainly related to creating vision and direction, but it extends beyond setting in motion and coordinating progress toward strategic organizational goals within the organization. Stewardship involves embodying and modeling behavior consistent with those goals and taking responsibility for the consequences of such plans and actions (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011), which involves accepting accountability from both internal and external stakeholders.

Integrity

This component captures a number of related dimensions appearing across servant leadership competency taxonomies, including honesty (Russell & Stone, 2002), integrity (Wong & Page, 2003), and responsible morality (Sendjaya et al., 2008). Much like the vision and direction component, the importance of leader integrity and, more broadly, ethical behavior is by no means unique to the idea of servant leadership (Brown & Trevino, 2006), as integrity is likely essential to any model of effective leadership. Nowhere may this be more important, however, than to the superordinate leadership role, which is evidenced by its consistent appearance among servant leadership taxonomies. Integrity reflects the character of the leader and is the cornerstone for trust-building among followers (Shaw, 1997), as well as cultivating credibility and motive (Wong & Page, 2003). In essence, behavior by leaders not perceived as being honest or ethical is likely to be received with skepticism, and such leaders are unlikely to achieve buy-in from followers regardless of their efforts to serve, empower, or instill a vision.

Interpersonal Appreciation

Interpersonal appreciation is a component that reflects servant leaders' value and appreciation of others (Russell & Stone, 2002). Essential to interpersonal appreciation is that servant leaders accept individuals for who they are, including their background and perspectives (Sendjaya et al., 2008; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011), which likely often differ from the leader's background to varying extents. Interpersonal appreciation builds on the importance of integrity to developing interpersonal trust and paving the way for positively influencing followers through service and empowerment. Most leadership models acknowledge the importance of developing interpersonal relations. Some of these theories recognize leader charisma as being a vital means of developing interpersonal influence (Bass, 1985; Conger & Kanungo, 1998). We do not argue that certain aspects of charisma cannot be beneficial to the superordinate leadership role. Moreover, commonalities have been proposed between servant and charismatic leadership, including creating a vision and showing confidence in followers' ability to perform (Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). However, charisma has been proposed to exist on a continuum of impression management behaviors that, on the far end, is characterized by belligerence, dominance, and manipulation (Steyrer, 1998). This dark side of charismatic leadership has led many to distinguish it from servant leadership, as the latter is characterized by a genuine interest in followers, as opposed to the self or organization (Graham, 1991; Stone et al., 2004; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Although not all of the taxonomies explicitly included a dimension reflecting interpersonal appreciation, the majority of taxonomies allude to interpersonal appreciation as part of one or more dimensions (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). We contend that it is implausible that a leader would demonstrate behaviors consistent with servant leadership without a genuine interest in followers. Although many of the attributes of charismatic leadership can be beneficial to the superordinate leadership role, we argue that the dark-side attributes that can arise cannot be sustainably effective. However, those attributes consistent with interpersonal appreciation should produce lasting positive effects.

Summary of Servant Leadership Core Competency Model

In reviewing a number of existing taxonomies, we have identified six competency dimensions of servant leadership: service, empowerment, creating vision and direction, stewardship, and interpersonal appreciation. We believe our model to be highly parsimonious in that it is constrained to only the core components that have appeared with the greatest consistency across existing taxonomies. Additionally, some overlap is likely to exist among these dimensions, which is partially a function of integrating some of the dimensions we reviewed into more inclusive, higher-order dimensions. For example, creating vision and direction and stewardship are competencies that are likely to be closely related. First, both function largely at the organizational level. In addition, one could argue that stewardship is in some ways an extension of creating vision and direction, in that the former involves embodying and taking responsibility for actions associated with the latter. Service and empowerment are also likely interconnected as attending to and acting on the behalf of follower's needs. Surely service and empowerment influence the servant leader's approach to motivating, building confidence in, and developing followers. Interpersonal appreciation also likely influences the servant leader's willingness and ability to serve and empower followers, and, as alluded to above, integrity is the fundamental attribute of which effectively using any of the other core competencies hinges. However, we might also consider both integrity and interpersonal appreciation as most similar to one another for these very reasons. That is, both are essential to the leader's establishing rapport with followers and within the organization. A leader's attempt to effectively serve a superordinate role will be severely limited, if not impossible without demonstrating efficient behavior relevant to these two components.

Servant Leadership Core Competency: A Comparison to Traditional Leader and Follower Prototypes

We believe our model provides a foundation for understanding the competencies associated with the superordinate leadership role. Moreover, our model clearly differentiates between leadership and followership

competencies. Based on our identification of the core servant leadership components, Table 3 compares and contrasts servant (i.e., superordinate) leadership, traditional leadership, and followership competencies.

Table 3 Comparison of superordinate leadership prototypes to implicit leadership theory and implicit followership theory prototypes

Superordinate leader prototypes	Leader prototypes[a]	Follower prototypes[b]
Empowerment: e.g., motivate, instill confidence, develop	NA	NA
Creating vision/direction: e.g., enact vision, coordinate	NA	NA
Integrity: e.g., honest, ethical	NA	NA
Stewardship: e.g., responsible, dedicated, role model	*Dedication*: hard-working, motivated, dedicated	*Industry*: hard-working, productive, goes above and beyond
Interpersonal appreciation: e.g., empathetic, open to perspectives of others	*Dynamism*: e.g., energetic, charismatic, bold	*Enthusiasm*: excited, outgoing, happy
(see *Interpersonal Appreciation*)	*Sensitivity*: e.g., helpful, warm, sympathetic	NA
NA	NA	*Good citizen*: loyal, reliable, team player
		Follower anti-prototypes
NA	*Intelligence*: e.g., knowledgeable, educated, intellectual	*Incompetence*: uneducated, slow, inexperienced
NA	*Masculinity*: masculine, male	NA
	Leader anti-prototype	
Service: e.g., put others first, listen, demonstrate importance of follower needs	*Tyranny*: e.g., pushy, domineering, selfish	*Insubordination*: arrogant, rude, bad-tempered
NA	NA	*Conformity*: easily influenced, follows trends, soft-spoken

[a]Adapted from "Implicit Leadership Theories: Content, Structure, and Generalizability", by L. R. Offermann, J. K. Kennedy, and P. W. Wirtz, 1994, *Leadership Quarterly, 5*, 43–58

[b]Adapted from "What Do You Think of Followers? Examining the Content, Structure, and Consequences of Implicit Follower Theories", by T. Sy, 2010, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 113*, 73–84

As Table 3 shows, there is far less overlap between the competencies associated with servant leadership and the prototypical competencies attributed to either leadership or followership than there is between the prototypical competencies of leadership and followership, themselves. For example, absent from both the implicit leadership and followership models are competencies associated with empowerment, creating vision and direction, and integrity. Furthermore, the overlap between stewardship and dedication (leader prototype) and industry (follower prototype) is minimal. The greatest overlap can be found for interpersonal appreciation, which overlaps with both dynamism and sensitivity (both leader prototypes), and service, which overlaps with tyranny (leader antiprototype) and insubordination (follower anti-prototype).

We do not propose that the competencies of empowerment, creating vision and direction, integrity, and stewardship are entirely unique from those discussed in other contemporary leadership theories (Barling, Christie, & Hoption, 2011). In fact, we have explicitly acknowledged a number of commonalities throughout the above discussion. However, the competencies associated with the superordinate role appear seldom in comparison to the prototypical leader and follower attributes among prominent managerial competency models (Tett et al., 2000), which only further evidences the need to revisit the competencies associated with the leadership role in today's organizations. In the following section, we propose work conditions that lend themselves particularly well to the superordinate role of the servant leader.

Job Characteristics Matching Servant Leader Attributes

Although organizational changes have enhanced the importance of the superordinate leadership role, the extent to which this role will be important to effective leadership will surely differ based on a number of characteristics of the work context. Thus, we contend that servant leadership will be better suited to a leader's functioning in some work contexts than others. We have identified a number of work contexts in which there may be the greatest benefit for leaders who possess servant leader competencies.

Organizational Structure Characteristics

Structural characteristics of the organization have been among the defining features upon which our arguments for revisiting the role of leadership in today's workplace are built. We identified two broad structural characteristics to be highly relevant: high differentiation and use of self-managing individuals and teams.

High Differentiation

Differentiation is characterized by the extent to which an organization's structure is segmented into subunits. There are many reasons an organization may become increasingly differentiated, including to meet complex or changing environmental demands, as a function of complex work tasks, and due to increased organizational size (Child, 1972). As an extreme example of a highly differentiated organization, a multinational conglomerate may offer products and services that range from energy, to real estate, to home goods within different geographical markets spanning the globe. Such diversity in product and service offerings and geographical markets served would likely require considerable segmentation of the organization into highly specialized units. Such high differentiation makes integrating information, resources, and efforts among specialized units toward an organization's overarching strategic goals an increasingly difficult task.

The presence of differentiation is not limited to conglomerates. Consider a small restaurant chain, in which teams are carrying out largely the same tasks from one store to another. Inevitably, each store will be faced with many of the same task efficiency problems, and while a more efficient way may be identified at one store, a lack of communication between stores will result in the problem continuing to exist at the other locations. Similarly, most academicians can attest to realizing that a colleague in another department at their university or even on another floor in their own building has been toiling over the same or a similar issue as them for months or even years. In essence, in our highly specialized world of work, high differentiation is not uncommon, and organizations

face a range of pitfalls relating to operational efficiency when they are highly differentiated. Integration is needed among differentiated units within organizations in order to ensure that units are moving in concert, as opposed to independently. As characterized above with regard to the study conducted by Lawrence and Lorsch (1967), servant leadership poses considerable value in increasing integration among differentiated units, whether that involves aligning strategic goals across a multinational's real estate and energy subsidiaries, sharing procedural innovations between pizza chain stores, or coordinating research resources and efforts on a university campus.

Self-Managing Followers and Self-Directed Teams

We have already highlighted that organizations are taking on flatter forms with fewer middle managers and less bureaucracy, while greater responsibility is being redirected to those in follower roles. This, of course, has increased the opportunity for and expectation of self-management among individual followers, as well as teams.

Self-directed work teams include two or more employees who share functionally interrelated tasks and are collectively responsible for end products, and whose members are responsible for assigning roles, planning work, making decisions autonomously, and solving problems (Wall, Kemp, Jackson, & Clegg, 1986; Wellins et al., 1990). Successful self-directed work teams are able to effectively manage these responsibilities due to a high degree of self-determination and a varied skillset across members (Wall et al., 1986), and self-directed teams have been shown to be effective with regard to a range of criteria. For example, self-managing teams have been associated with high customer service, productivity, product quality, and job satisfaction (Cohen & Ledford, 1994; Wall et al., 1986; Wellins et al., 1990).

However, self-directed teams also require the support and resources needed to effectively manage themselves and their task responsibilities. With regard to support, as operational control is increasingly passed on to self-directed teams and individuals, the importance of trust and empowerment also increases (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). Servant lead-

ers promote both such ideas, as highlighted in our discussion of core competencies. With regard to resources, although self-directed teams and individuals may be highly motivated, if they are not provided critical information and tools, the success of their efforts will be limited. Thus, self-directed teams and individuals will benefit greatly from servant leaders taking on the role of Lawrence and Lorsch's (1967) liaisons.

Organizational Learning Culture

The same economic and environmental trends (e.g., globalization, rapid technological advances) affecting organizational structure characteristics are also affecting organizational values and culture. Organizational learning is believed to be essential to organizations' ability to remain relevant in the face of increasing competition. Organizations that effectively instill a culture of learning are thought to be at a competitive advantage due to their increased ability to continuously adapt (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). However, this is often easier stated than executed. This is because organizational learning begins at the individual level within organizations—that is, with individual learning. Learning at the organizational level is a function of the extent to which such individually learned knowledge is effectively transferred to and applied by others within the organization (Simon, 1991). Although there are numerous ways in which servant leadership can positively affect knowledge transfer and, more broadly, organizational learning, we have identified two common managerial approaches that can certainly be strengthened by servant leadership: a total quality management (TQM) philosophy and organizational coaching and mentorship.

TQM Philosophy

TQM represents a good example of the tenets underlying a learning organization. The TQM philosophy emphasizes a number of values relating to how work gets done, including continuous improvement, increased employee involvement, teamwork, and task and procedural redesign (Powell, 1995). Despite the popularity of the TQM philosophy among

both scholars and practitioners, problems with effectively implementing a TQM culture have been acknowledged. For example, "a common problem in TQM programs is that policies are formally instituted at the top management level but do not affect actual behavior and work group culture of supervisors and operatives" (Zeitz, Johannesson, & Ritchie, 1997, p. 415). Those with servant leader competencies may be more likely to empower followers to uncover ways to improve work processes and value each individual's proposed solutions. Moreover, given the disconnect that often exists between the top and frontline management, servant leadership at lower levels of the organization may be most critical to successfully executing the TQM philosophy.

Coaching and Mentorship

Servant leadership characteristics should be expected to be essential in work contexts in which a high value is placed on follower mentorship and/or coaching. A number of competencies described above are relevant to effective coaching and mentorship, for example: stewardship (e.g., modeling effective behavior), empowerment (e.g., instilling a sense of efficacy), and interpersonal appreciation (e.g., understanding and acknowledging follower values and qualities on which to build). However, no competency is as explicitly relevant as service. Mentorship and coaching are themselves acts of service. It is through these acts that the leader contributes to the organizational goals by addressing the growth, development, and well-being of followers (Russell & Stone, 2002). Organizations that fail to place individuals with a strong sense of service into coaching and mentorship roles will also fail to gain the maximum benefits of coaching and mentorship efforts.

Conclusion

We began this chapter by highlighting the surprising similarity between existing taxonomies of leader and follower competencies. To understand how this may have come to be, we took a historical perspective. By doing

so, we brought to light the fact that work structures and individual worker responsibilities have changed considerably between the seminal periods of scholarly work on leadership and followership. One key consequence of these changes has been that followers are increasingly being tasked with responsibilities traditionally assigned to leaders. Consequently, leaders are being tasked with a superordinate leadership role, a phenomenon that we suggest warrants greater attention in the scientific literature.

We propose that the concept of servant leadership provides a natural fit with the superordinate leadership role, making it a viable starting point for capturing superordinate leader competencies, and one that may help alleviate the leader-follower competency similarity problem that currently exists. As mentioned, there has been considerable variability in the specific dimensions that have been put forth across the servant leadership competency model taxonomies we reviewed. In addition, the number of dimensions included in these taxonomies has varied, leading to differing levels of precision with which individual dimensions have been defined. As Table 2 depicts, we have attempted to incorporate more specific dimensions from existing taxonomies into the six overarching dimensions we identified. We also note in Table 2 a number of dimensions that have been put forth in existing taxonomies that we determined to not fit into any of the six dimensions we identified. In some cases, aspects of these dimensions provided a plausible fit with more than one of the dimensions we identified, while others were largely unique from dimensions identified in other studies or our own framework. In regard to existing servant leadership taxonomies, we do not suggest our taxonomy to be the only possible organizing framework. Instead, our goal was to identify a parsimonious set of core components of servant leadership that has been most consistently included across existing taxonomies. Additionally, we believe these competencies will serve as a viable starting point for understanding the attributes associated with the superordinate leader role and, more broadly, contribute to the theory regarding the distinction between leadership and followership.

Finally, we presented a set of four potential key moderating characteristics (high differentiation, reliance on self-managing followers and teams, embrace of a TQM philosophy, and emphasis on coaching and mentoring) that will most likely elicit servant leadership competencies. Not coincidentally, these are also conditions under which followers are most likely
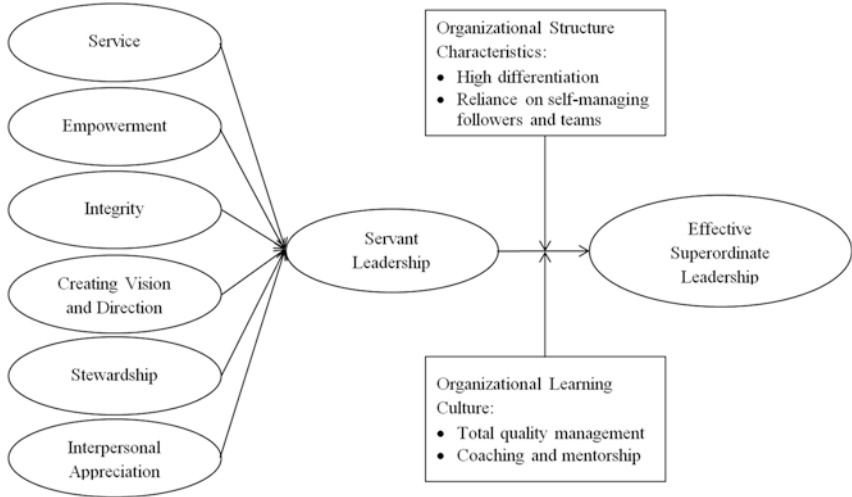
Fig. 1 Model of servant leadership role in today's workplace

to be assigned traditional leadership responsibilities. A model describing the role of servant leadership as a means of capturing the superordinate leadership role and its effect on effective leadership in today's workplace is presented in Fig. 1. It is our hope that this chapter will stimulate scholarly attention to the existing issue of leader-follower competency similarity, the increasing prominence of the superordinate leadership role in today's workplace, and the viability of servant leadership competencies for carrying out superordinate leadership responsibilities.

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