

**CLOSING THE LEADERSHIP CIRCLE:  
BUILDING AND TESTING A CONTINGENT THEORY OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP**

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For Debra and Terry and Chuck,  
for showing the way

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iv
LIST OF TABLES .....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	viii
SUMMARY .....	ix
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER 2: ON LEADERSHIP AS A GENERAL CONSTRUCT .....	6
2.1 Understandings of leadership.....	6
2.1.1 A brief history of leadership study.....	6
2.1.2 What leadership is and should be.....	10
2.2 Outcomes and orientations of leadership .....	13
2.2.1 People and performance.....	13
2.2.2 Positive organizational change .....	17
2.2.3 Stakeholder concerns .....	18
2.2.4 A holistic approach to understanding leadership .....	19
CHAPTER 3: UNDERSTANDING SERVANT LEADERSHIP .....	23
3.1 The conceptual vagueness of servant leadership .....	23
3.2 Scholarly approaches to servant leadership .....	26
3.2.1 Early work on servant leadership.....	26
3.2.2 Servant leadership across cultures .....	27
3.2.3 Servant leadership and transformational leadership .....	29
3.2.4 New outcomes of servant leadership .....	31
3.2.5 Mechanisms of servant leadership's impact .....	33
3.2.6 Other approaches to servant leadership .....	35
3.3 Greenleaf's approach to servant leadership.....	37
3.3.1 The originator of the servant leader concept.....	37
3.3.2 Greenleaf's "servant-as-leader" .....	37
3.3.3 Servant leadership, religion, and philosophy .....	40
3.3.4 How Greenleaf might define servant leadership.....	41
3.3.5 Greenleaf as theory-in-use .....	42
3.4 A conceptual, behavioral definition of servant leadership.....	45
CHAPTER 4: A CONTINGENT THEORY OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP'S EFFECTS .....	49
4.1 On theory .....	49
4.2 Social exchange as mechanism of leadership .....	49
4.3 Transmission through social learning .....	51
4.4 Mediators of servant leadership's impact on behavioral outcomes.....	57
4.4.1 Motivation.....	57
4.4.2 Resources .....	60

4.5 Behavioral outcomes of servant leadership .....	63
4.5.1 Employee voice behaviors .....	63
4.5.2 In-role performance .....	68
4.5.3 Subordinate servant leadership behaviors.....	73
4.6 Gender and gender role schema as moderators of servant leadership .....	80
CHAPTER 5: METHODS AND ANALYSIS.....	86
5.1 Sample and procedure.....	86
5.1.1 Research sites and data collection.....	86
5.1.2 Power analysis .....	88
5.2 Measures .....	89
5.2.1 Servant leadership (managers and employees) .....	90
5.2.2 Other operationalizations .....	92
5.3 Preliminary Analysis.....	95
5.3.1 Data integrity .....	95
5.3.2 Nested data / random coefficient check .....	96
5.3.3 Common method variance check.....	96
5.3.4 Confirmatory factor analysis of data structure.....	97
5.4 Analysis and results .....	98
5.4.1 Clustered moderation analysis design.....	98
5.4.2 Results of hypothesis tests .....	103
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION.....	115
6.1 Summary of results .....	115
6.2 Implications .....	116
6.2.1 Theoretical implications and future research directions .....	116
6.2.2 Practical implications.....	125
6.2.3 Limitations .....	128
6.2.4 Conclusion .....	130
APPENDIX A: DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF MEASUREMENT.....	131
APPENDIX B: MEASURE ITEMS .....	132
REFERENCES .....	135

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Means, standard deviations, & correlations for study variables .....	99
Table 2	Multilevel model results for Hypotheses 1-8.....	104
Table 3	Multilevel moderation results for Hypotheses 9-10.....	106
Table 4	Multilevel moderated mediation results for Hypothesis 11 .....	109
Table 5	Multilevel moderated mediation results for Hypothesis 12.....	112
Table 6	Measure length, time of collection, and data source.....	131

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Current findings regarding servant leadership.....	28
Figure 2	Hypothesized model of servant leadership's contingent effects.....	85
Figure 3a	Servant leadership and female schema predicting prosocial motivation .....	108
Figure 3b	Servant leadership and female schema predicting PsyCap.....	108
Figure 4a	Servant leadership and manager gender predicting voice.....	110
Figure 4b	Servant leadership and manager gender predicting performance .....	111
Figure 4c	Servant leadership and manager gender predicting employee servant leadership .....	111
Figure 5	Final model of servant leadership's contingent effects .....	114



## SUMMARY

Servant leadership focuses on stakeholder concern and follower development and empowerment. It has begun to emerge as a useful perspective of leadership within academic research, but theoretical development remains limited, and some of its key propositions have not been tested. In this dissertation I build and test a theory of how servant leadership works, why it works, and when it works. Drawing on the extant servant leadership literature, a social learning perspective, and research on gender roles and schemas, I propose a conceptual definition and theory of how servant leadership impacts two characteristics of followers (prosocial motivation and psychological capital) to affect distal outcomes including voice and performance. I also test servant leadership's impact on the spread of servant leadership behaviors to followers, a key proposition of servant leadership for nearly fifty years which has never been empirically tested. Further, I propose gender and gender schemas as potential moderators of servant leadership, arguing that the more communal emphasis of this approach may interact with sex role factors to impact its effectiveness, such that females may actually have an advantage in using servant leadership, as opposed to the implicit masculine advantage in other leadership behaviors.

To answer these research questions, I conducted a temporally lagged multi-organizational study testing the mediators, moderators, and outcomes of servant leadership. Using a variance decomposition approach to clustered and cross-level interactions in an HLM framework, I find substantial support for my theoretical predictions. Results support the idea that exposure to servant leadership behaviors is associated with all three performance outcomes, including an employee's own enactment of servant leadership, both directly and through the mediating effects of positive psychological capital. These effects were contingent as hypothesized, such that servant leadership was more powerful when used by a female manager, and when experienced by individuals with high female gender schemas. Theoretical and practical implications of these conclusions, as well as future research suggested by these results, are discussed.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

As society faces new challenges in the forms of increased globalization, corporate scandal, and ethical meltdowns, management scholars have increasingly recognized the inadequacy of the dominant and primarily goal-focused forms of leadership which have been their focus of study for decades (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Nohria & Khurana, 2010). The literature has repeatedly indicated that subordinates prefer leaders who also value ethics and relationships, that they work better for those kinds of leaders, and that such leadership is essential to building both more sustainable organizations and stronger societies (Cameron, 2008; Ehrhart & Klein, 2001; Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007b). Additionally, evidence is growing that such leadership focused on followers and stakeholders may actually be most effective in terms of growing organizational performance and financial outcomes (de Luque, Washburn, Waldman, & House, 2008; Kiffin-Petersen, Murphy, & Soutar, 2012; Owens & Hekman, 2012).

In need of a different lens of leadership which emphasizes cooperation and care for stakeholders over power and short-term gains, many researchers have rediscovered servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970; van Dierendonck, 2011) as an approach which may better meet the needs of modern organizations and societies. Servant leadership differs from traditional approaches in that rather than focusing exclusively on organizational goal attainment through the exercise of power, servant leaders prioritize caring and developing their subordinates, and through them positively impacting the organization, its external environment, and even broader institutions and society in general (Greenleaf, 1998). Whereas traditional approaches such as the transformational leadership construct are explicitly ethically neutral (Bass, 1985; Thompson, 1956), the idea of servant leadership suggests that leadership behaviors should be oriented towards ethical ends as well as performance, resulting in positive outcomes for the focal

organization, subordinates, and society at large (Greenleaf, 1977; Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008). It adds to the general ethical leadership approach by including stakeholder and performance concerns alongside its promotion of ethical behaviors (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005).

The concept of the servant-as-leader was originally conceived in the 1960's and 70's after several decades of practice and observation by management consultant Robert K. Greenleaf, in what I will argue is best understood as a theory-in-use approach (Argyris & Schon, 1974; Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). Perhaps due to this lack of academic origin, and perhaps due to the religious frameworks in which it was frequently discussed (Blanchard & Hodges, 2003), servant leadership was seldom considered in academic contexts until fairly recently (Liden, Panaccio, Meuser, Hu, & Wayne, 2014a) despite its immense popularity in practice and the business press (Johnson, 2011). Spurred by repeated calls for more ethical and socially responsible approaches to leadership (Chaleff, 2008; Nohria & Khurana, 2010), the last few years have seen a surge of literature exploring the numerous positive impacts of servant leadership on organizations and their performance (see van Dierendonck, 2011, for a review). Servant leadership behaviors have recently been related to various metrics of subordinate performance, as well as trust, psychological safety, positive climates, team potency, commitment, work engagement, and organizational citizenship behavior (Hu & Liden, 2011; Liden, Wayne, Liao, & Meuser, 2014b; Liden et al., 2008; Peterson, Galvin, & Lange, 2012; Schaubroeck, Lam, & Peng, 2011; van Dierendonck, Stam, Boersma, de Windt, & Alkema, 2013; Walumbwa, Hartnell, & Oke, 2010).

Despite this very meaningful progress, however, certain aspects of servant leadership crucial to a full understanding of it remain unexamined. First, although useful operational structures have emerged in the development of valid measurements (Ehrhart, 2004; Liden et al., 2008), there remains as of yet no accepted and concise conceptual definition of servant leadership behaviors. The original writings on servant leadership defined it only in terms of its outcomes - that those being led become "healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to

become servants" (Greenleaf, 1977) - leaving the exact nature of servant leadership behaviors somewhat unclear (Greenleaf, 1996a). Leadership has traditionally eluded precise and agreed-upon definition by academics (Yukl, 2010), and perhaps as a result, most research on servant leadership has focused on construct measurement and scale development, providing operational but not conceptual definitions of what it actually entails and how it fits into broader understandings of leadership (Hunter et al., 2013). The first contribution of this paper, then, is to review the current state of both general and servant leadership research, propose an appropriate conceptual core definition of the topic building on this work, and determine how servant leadership fits within the many extant approaches to leadership. Consistent with past literature on servant leadership, I expand on prior definitions to conclude that it might be best understood as influential behaviors, manifested humbly and ethically within relationships, oriented towards follower development, empowerment, and continuous and meaningful improvement for all stakeholders (including but not limited to those being led, communities, customers, and the leader, team, and organization themselves).

This core understanding of servant leadership is essential to resolving a second issue with its academic study: although operationalizations and empirical studies have become quite plentiful (van Dierendonck, 2011), there is as of yet little rigorous theory on what servant leadership is, how it works, and when it works (Sutton & Staw, 1995; Whetten, 1989). Liden and colleagues (Liden et al., 2014a; Liden et al., 2008) have laid the groundwork for this theory by operationally establishing servant leadership and suggesting several mediators and outcomes, but have called for rigorous theory-building on its exact conceptualization and processes of affecting performance outcomes. Through this call, they seek to avoid an issue common to academic approaches to leadership: such research is often driven more by empirics and observation than theory (Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013; Yukl, 2010), without regard to integration with extant theories (Avolio, 2007). Further, scholarship directly investigating the mediational processes by which leadership affects outcomes is somewhat rare (Morgeson, DeRue, & Karam, 2010). My

second contribution is therefore to leverage this definition of servant leadership, alongside Greenleaf's original writings and recent scholarly studies, to propose a theory of how servant leadership behaviors affect various key outcomes, and when certain boundary conditions might suppress or enhance its effectiveness. I draw on several extant theories and perspectives in assembling these propositions, chief among them social learning (Bandura, 1977b) other-orientation (Meglino & Korsgaard, 2004), and gender role theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

In alignment with existing work on servant leadership, this theory and subsequent empirical investigation examine mediators, moderators, and outcomes underrepresented in organizational research, such as positive psychological capital (Luthans et al., 2007b) and gender role schemas. In addition, I propose and test a key component of Greenleaf's servant leadership thesis (1977) which has remained unexamined: are the followers of servant leaders transformed into servants themselves, growing and manifesting that growth both within and outside of organizations? Extant research primarily considers servant leadership's outcomes as driven by leader trust and normative pressures arising from emergent climates (Liden et al., 2008; Schaubroeck et al., 2011), and whereas those mechanisms certainly are reasonable expectations, they do not speak to the critical proposition of servant leadership that those being led become more ethical and confident individuals, themselves willing and able to serve (Graham, 1991; Greenleaf, 1977). As Liden and colleagues (2014a) point out, the question of how and whether followers themselves become servants remains unexamined. This research therefore examines the process by which servant leadership may affect followers, what characteristics of followers are likely to be altered in terms of motives and individual differences, and what behavioral outcomes are likely to arise from those outcomes. I also answer calls to investigate *when* servant leadership might or might not affect outcomes (Liden et al., 2014a; Peterson et al., 2012; Walumbwa et al., 2010) by examining the moderating impacts of manager gender (Liden et al., 2014b) and subordinate gender role schema (Eagly & Karau, 2002), the latter representing an individual's deeply held cognitions associating gender with certain personal characteristics and societal roles.

I align my research questions with Whetten's (1989) building blocks of theory development: What is servant leadership? How is it related to its outcomes, both proximal and distal? Why are those relationships expected to hold? And finally, when might these relationships be weaker or stronger, moderated by other factors? I propose two key individual variables - subordinate prosocial motivation and positive psychological capital (PsyCap) - which mediate servant leadership behavior's effects on distal outcomes including voice, organizational performance, and the enactment of subordinates' own servant leader behaviors. To answer my research questions I conducted a temporally lagged multi-organizational study examining the impacts over time of servant leadership behaviors. Data from this study are examined with a multi-level moderated mediation approach incorporating random coefficient methodology and full variance decomposition, to test support of the hypothesized model.

It is appropriate to first review scholarly understandings of leadership in general, to better understand how servant leadership might best fit within our literature. I follow this discussion with a review of servant leadership: how it is currently understood, what research has been conducted on it, and how it was originally conceptualized. I then propose a definition and theory of servant leadership, arguing specific hypotheses for outcomes, mediators, and moderators. This is followed by an explanation of the study methodology, results of analyses, and a discussion of findings.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **ON LEADERSHIP AS A GENERAL CONSTRUCT**

#### **2.1 Understandings of leadership**

##### **2.1.1 A brief history of leadership study**

Leadership is somewhat unique among management and social psychological constructs such that in a field where clear definitions of our variables are of paramount importance to theory (Bono & McNamara, 2011), and despite massive attention to the topic, there is regardless little consensus as to what leadership actually is. As Stogdill remarked several decades ago, there are "almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept" (Stogdill, 1974; p. 259). Providing a complete review of the history of leadership definitions is outside the scope of this paper, but some representative examples are useful to understand how the construct has evolved over time and implicitly grown more connected to the servant-as-leader approach. Early theorists defined leadership as a collection of extraordinary personality characteristics, empowering the leader to inspire others to action through their charisma rather than authority based on traditional or rational-legal systems (Bingham, 1927; Weber, Henderson, & Parsons, 1947). Such leadership acts through a basis of referent power (French & Raven, 1959), in that individuals do as the leader requests due to their strong liking for the leader, likely involving significant relational identification (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). Scholars later concluded that such a definition of leadership was inadequate, however, as it did more to describe the leader him- or herself than the actual leadership behaviors which manifested.

Although charismatic bases for leadership are still quite prevalent and useful in modern research (Conger & Kanungo, 1987), scholars of the mid-twentieth century turned to a behavioral focus, defining leadership generally as occurring when one individual altered the behaviors of another (Bass, 1960; Hemphill, 1949). The early management scholar Chester Barnard may have spurred this change in direction as he often argued for a more behavioral understanding of

leadership, explaining it as "the act of creating awareness of and belief in an organization's purpose, without which there would be insufficient effort for the organization's survival" (Barnard, 1938). These behavioral approaches to leadership were most often measured through assessment of behaviors grouped into two categories: *consideration*, representing an orientation towards people; and *initiating structure*, representing an orientation toward task accomplishment (Fleishman, 1953b; Judge, Piccolo, & Ilies, 2004). The focus of this literature was explicitly on exploration of broad groups of behaviors which led to leadership effectiveness, rather than examination of why those behaviors might be effective (Fleishman, 1953b). Although initially fruitful, this general approach led to a flood of conflicting, insignificant, and unreliable studies, eventually contributing to a decline in interest in leadership and a corresponding belief that the concept was unimportant to organizations (Lombardo & McCall, 1978), leading Miner (1975) to recommend at a meeting of leadership scholars "that we abandon leadership in favor of some other, more fruitful way of cutting up the theoretical pie" (p. 200). In hindsight, it is likely that whereas the move from leader personality to leadership behavior was a step in the right direction, this purely behavioral approach suffered from two scientific flaws. First, understandings of leadership as the mere act of changing another's behavior were more consistent with the use of power than any definition of leadership (Bass, 1990); by that conceptualization, a mugger forcing a victim to give up his wallet would be exemplary leadership. Second, and perhaps more importantly, there was little theory as to why exactly any particular behaviors might lead to effectiveness; rather, leadership was a mysterious construct that could only be understood by its outcomes (Fleishman, 1953b; Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). Without theory, scholars had no basis on which to ground expectations.

Two significant new approaches emerged attempting to deal with these quandaries: in the first, political scientist James MacGregor Burns introduced the concept of the 'transforming' leader (which would later evolve into the transformational leadership paradigm), and in the second, organizational scholars introduced the idea of leadership as a relationship, the quality of



which might determine outcomes of interest. The latter idea, emerging from the theory of vertical dyad linkage (Dansereau Jr, Graen, & Haga, 1975), became the basis of Leader-Member-Exchange theory (LMX: Liden & Graen, 1980), which states that the quality of relationships between leaders and followers may differ among varying subordinates of the same leader, ranging from simple contractual arrangements to deeper dyadic ties. An LMX approach defines leadership as representing the simple quality of relationship between a leader and each individual follower, and these relationships have been shown to be predictive of important organizational outcomes such as satisfaction and performance (Liden & Maslyn, 1998). The LMX paradigm, like those before it, has also been the subject of some criticism for its inattention to leader influence on overall groups (Cogliser & Schriesheim, 2000; Hogg, Martin, & Weeden, 2004), its lack of explanation of exactly what behaviors constitute leadership (Amabile, Schatzel, Moneta, & Kramer, 2004; Schriesheim, Castro, & Cogliser, 1999), and other measurement and methodological concerns (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009).

Concurrently, and building on Burns' (1978) idea of the 'transforming' leader and earlier work on leader charisma, Bass (1985) proposed a three-dimensional construct of transformational leadership: individual consideration, representing mentorship and subordinate skill development; intellectual stimulation, or encouragement of team members to create new solutions to existing problems; and charismatic leadership, in which the leader used his or her stimulating personality to infuse followers with a relevant sense of meaning. A fourth factor, inspirational motivation, was later added to capture a leader's passionate and effective communication of a future idea for the organization (Avolio & Bass, 1991; Hater & Bass, 1988). Although this model was quickly embraced by a new generation of leadership scholars, there remained some concern as to how 'transformational' simple charisma really was (e.g. Barbuto, 1997). As a result, the charismatic leadership dimension was reframed as 'idealized influence', in which the leader models appropriate behaviors for followers (Judge, Woolf, Hurst, & Livingston, 2006b).

Transformational leadership rose to become so dominant in the field that it was to many scholars the very definition of effective leadership (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Judge et al., 2006b; Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). However, this paradigm has in recent years been subject to at least as much scholarly criticism as its predecessors, leading to calls to reconsider it altogether (Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013; Yukl, 1999). A relatively unique criticism of transformational leadership involves its morality: while the stated goal of transformational leadership is to increase individual performance through transforming subordinate priorities (Bass, 1985), there is nothing in the concept which speaks to ethical treatment of or concern for followers (Walumbwa et al., 2010). Transformational leaders owe their allegiance not to their subordinates but to the organization and its goals (Graham, 1991) and do not consider supporting followers to be a core component of their leadership responsibilities (Yukl, 1999). Further, some scholars have questioned the ethics of leadership behaviors which cause subordinates to alter their priorities to make work more relatively important than personal concerns, when that leadership is driven by improving the welfare of the organization rather than helping subordinates themselves (Stephens, D'Intino, & Victor, 1995). Even the transformational leadership dimension of individualized consideration is limited to mentoring followers and developing their skills, not for the benefit of the follower, but rather to enhance that individual's productivity. This led the individual most often credited with conceptualizing transformational leadership, Bernard Bass, to admit that the idea of transformational leadership as commonly understood could indeed lead to highly undesirable consequences for individuals and organizations (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Meanwhile, other bases for criticisms to this approach are similar to those throughout the history of leadership scholarship, such as invalid measurement (e.g. Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013), lack of attention to group-level effects (e.g. Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003), and the absence of theory as to how transformational leadership works and why its components would be expected to exist together (e.g. Yukl, 1999).

It is worth noting that this suggested lack of theoretical basis for transformational leadership is an issue that remains problematic for study of general leadership as well (Hackman, 2002; Kerr & Jermier, 1978; Morgeson et al., 2010; Yukl, 2010), and both practitioners and academics have defined leadership by its outcomes, rather than its processes, for decades. Former U.S. presidents such as Truman and Eisenhower have famously defined leadership as "persuad[ing] people to do what they don't want to do, or do what they're too lazy to do, and like it," and "the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it," respectively. Even scholars have regularly fallen into this trap, as Van Knippenberg and Sitkin (2013) pointed out in their criticism of the transformational leadership scholarship, in which they noted that the concept of transformational leadership is defined only "in terms of its effects on followers" (p. 4). In this manner, any activity of an individual which is seen to increase commitment and boost performance, such as offering a pay raise, might be viewed as effective leadership. Other attempts at defining leadership remain unfortunately vague, such as Bass' (1990) suggestion that leadership is "an interaction among group members that *often* involves a structuring or restructuring of the situation and the perception and expectations of the members" (italics added). This definition might leave the reader wondering if leadership is simply *any* interaction among group members, since the rest only *often* occurs. Such vagueness has led to doubts as to whether leadership meaningfully exists or if it is a 'romantic myth' invented by individuals to rationalize team performance (Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, 1985; Miner, 1975). Scott Adams, the creator of the popular *Dilbert* comic strip, presented a unique take on the meaning of leadership as perceived by most subordinates: "Leadership is an intangible quality with no clear definition. That's probably a good thing, because if the people who were being led knew the definition, they would hunt down their leaders and kill them" (Adams, 1996).

### **2.1.2 What leadership is and should be**

Yukl (2010), in his review of the academic treatment of the subject, concludes that the only thing the many definitions of leadership have in common is their view of it as a process of

influence. It is important to note that Yukl avoids the outcome-as-definition trap in that he views the specific influence *behaviors* as comprising leadership, rather than the successful influence outcome (i.e. Yukl & Tracey, 1992). Others, such as those focused on the Leader-Member-Exchange (LMX) and emerging followership paradigms, contend that the root of all understandings of leadership is the idea of a relationship among a leader and an alter (e.g. Scandura & Graen, 1984; Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe, & Carsten, 2013). Both positions seem reasonable - in the process of leadership, a leader exerts influence on another individual over the course of some relationship (even if the relationship is one-sided, as might be the case with a well-known charismatic leader and a distant follower). It is also suggested by much of the literature on leadership, or at least strongly implied, that the process involves a focus on developing others, and simultaneously increasing subordinate motivations to engage in certain desired behaviors or reach particular goals (Burns, 1978; Lord & Brown, 2001; Yukl, 2010). The key to understanding leadership, it seems, may be in viewing it as influential but non-coercive behaviors enacted within relationships in order to build the motivation of others to accomplish certain tasks and goals, developing them as appropriate.

However, another possible criteria, not for what leadership *has been* but for what leadership *should be*, has arisen in the aftermath of the widespread corporate scandals of the twenty-first century (Fortune, 2009): leadership behaviors should help subordinates and the larger organizational and community contexts, rather than harm them. Leadership is not alone among fields of organizational study for which this call has been made; there are growing calls for both more attention to positive experiences and institutions throughout research on organizational behavior and psychology, and the need to understand and teach practices which increase the well-being of both individuals within organization, and the communities in which those organizations reside (e.g. Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003; Rucci, 2008). Perhaps no call for the promotion of more beneficial and positive forms of leadership is more apt than that of Nohria and Khurana, who introduce their *Handbook of Leadership Theory and Practice* by referencing

"a time when societies around the world are crying out for more and better leadership, when our current leaders (especially in business, but also in government and other spheres of public life) have lost legitimacy, questions are being asked, sometimes angrily, of the institutions that school these leaders: What kinds of leaders are these institutions developing that have caused so much hardship for so many? ... What is the vision or model of leadership that animates the curriculum and developmental models [of current leadership approaches taught in institutions]? If there is such a model, does it need to be revisited, reexamined, and revised in light of the widespread failures of leadership? Do we really understand what it takes to develop better leaders?" (Nohria & Khurana, 2010; p. 3)

Those authors, mirroring the aforementioned criticism of the dominant transformational approach to leadership, concluded that they cannot answer those questions with any confidence. Although most scholars historically considered leadership an ethically neutral affair (Bass, 1985; Rost, 1991; Thompson, 1956), a growing body of both researchers and practitioners have come to realize that although we may struggle to precisely determine leadership's definition, our understanding and instruction of leadership should include some ethical component of behavior which helps, or at least does not harm, followers and society (Brown et al., 2005; Nohria & Khurana, 2010; Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007; Podolny, Khurana, & Besharov, 2010). This indicates a need for communal orientation within leadership theories, operating alongside the predominantly agentic orientations found in many approaches. Communion and agency are orthogonal "fundamental modalities" within individuals, with agency representing individual concerns such as achievement and communion representing concerns for others (Bakan, 1966). Although often referred to as referencing values or motivations for the self as opposed to others, many concepts related to individual cognition and affect such as perspectives, judgments, and characteristics, are encompassed within the communion/agency dichotomy (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007). Both agentic constructs (such as self-efficacy and a drive to learn) and communal constructs (such as other-concern and morality) are thus viewed as desirable outcomes of leadership (but are not themselves leadership).

Establishing a precise definition of leadership palatable to the vast body of its researchers and practitioners is beyond the scope of this dissertation, and is perhaps an unrealistic ambition. Rather, a more useful approach to leadership may be to consider what it *should* be, for both

theoretical meaningfulness and practical value in a modern context. I propose consistent with the literature that there are several themes which should be included in a modern understanding of leadership, including established components such as influencing behaviors (Yukl, 1971) and quality relationships (Liden & Graen, 1980; Uhl-Bien et al., 2013), as well as this newer emphasis on leader ethics and humility (Owens & Hekman, 2012) and stakeholder well-being (de Luque et al., 2008). Additionally, and perhaps most importantly from a scientific perspective, underlying all of this must be grounded and logical theory explaining how and why leadership works (Morgeson et al., 2010), decoupled from reliance on outcomes (Hackman, 2010), with an underlying conceptual rationale as to why certain leader behaviors might exist in concert (Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013; Yukl, 2010).

## **2.2 Orientations and outcomes of leadership**

### **2.2.1 People and performance**

As described above, there is a growing consensus that a modern understanding of leadership must be infused with some sense of prosocial values, that leadership should involve behaviors geared toward helping rather than harming stakeholders and societies (Cameron, 2008; Nohria & Khurana, 2010; Rosenthal, 2011). This argument is similar at the organizational level to stakeholder theory (Laplume, Sonpar, & Litz, 2008), a macro approach to organizational priorities which argues that firms should consider the interests of all stakeholders (including communities, customers, environment, diversity, and mission/profit concerns) rather than prioritizing shareholders alone. This argument was first made by Freeman (1984) due to what he saw as an inability of other organizational theories to account for the rapidly changing business environment, including progress in globalization, information transparency, and consumer action. He originally called for attention to stakeholders for purely instrumental reasons: he believed that such consideration was essential to allowing firms to anticipate and prevent emerging threats, and to maximize new opportunities through access to resources connected to stakeholder groups. In later writing, he advocated stakeholders as both means to firm performance ends (instrumental)

and as ends in themselves, arguing that it is an organization's moral imperative to act responsibly on behalf of all stakeholders (Freeman, 1994; Freeman & Gilbert, 1988). This idea is in stark contrast to the traditional stockholder-focused idea that a firm exists only to generate wealth (Friedman, 1982). Critics of the stakeholder approach draw on agency theory (Eisenhardt, 1989a) to argue that stakeholder theory is itself unethical, as it redirects owner resources away from profit-creation (or mission-achievement) uses without owner consent (Jensen, 2010). Proponents of stakeholder theory have rebutted this by suggesting that stakeholder concern boosts profits and mission accomplishment in the long-term by improving firm-stakeholder relations and building organizational legitimacy, credibility, and attractiveness (de Luque et al., 2008; Margolis & Walsh, 2003).

Similarly, some scholars might be tempted to respond to the idea that organizational leadership should focus on benefitting several groups of stakeholders by asking how such stakeholder concern aligns with organizational goal accomplishment and performance, generally considered the expected outcomes of quality leadership in research (cf. Andersen, 2009; Giampetro-Meyer, Brown, Browne, & Kubasek, 1998; Rost, 1991). There are at least three avenues of rebuttal to this criticism: first, that leadership must not be defined and constrained merely by an expected performance outcome; second, that leadership might be understood as a collection of behaviors oriented most proximally toward the creation of meaning and positive change in others, rather than immediate performance goals; and third, that there is growing theoretical and conceptual evidence that this stakeholder concern may serve as a meaningful antecedent to more instrumental measures of team and organizational performance. Each of these arguments will be reviewed in turn.

First, a proximal performance/profit outcome cannot be a necessary condition of leadership, as this comes dangerously close to defining the construct by its outcomes (Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). Any understanding of a construct that relies overmuch on an expected outcome is tautological, and does not truly aid in understanding the construct at all.

Leadership might be understood as containing behaviors oriented toward performance (and I argue it should be), but this alone cannot be the extent of the definition. Further, it is arbitrary and atheoretical to assume that the sole aim of leadership is performance (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Podolny et al., 2010) in the absence of formal, accepted, and tested theory, alongside a firm conceptual definition of leadership, establishing that this is the case. Creativity researchers do not maintain that behaviors are not creative unless they immediately boost organizational performance; rather, creative behaviors generate ideas that are both novel and useful (George, 2007). Similarly, characterization of a behavior as just is not predicated on immediate positive efficiency boosts; rather, justice is a perception of fairness (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001). If leadership is to be tied strictly to behaviors which benefit immediate performance gains (which might more accurately describe the concept of 'management'; see Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Zaleznik, 1977), then formal theory must be presented making this case.

On the contrary, there is a growing scholarly understanding that leadership encompasses significantly more than merely behaviors which stimulate immediate performance. As Podolny and colleagues (2010) have pointed out, scholarly interest in understanding leadership first developed not because of interest in efficiency, but rather because it created well-being and purpose in the lives of followers. Typologies going back to the Leader Opinion Questionnaire (Fleishman, 1953a) have recognized that leadership behaviors are geared toward both people and goals, and Burns' (1978) original basis for the transforming leader was one who could "arouse, engage, and satisfy the motives of followers" (p. 18). Modern scholars, as well, have understood leadership behaviors as being oriented toward multiple desired outcomes (Yukl, 2010) and have even proposed theories of leadership for which the importance of organizational goals is limited (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008) or absent altogether (Brown et al., 2005). It is likely that the primary and proximal desired outcome of leadership is not merely performance, but rather an innate transformation of those being led, increasing their motivations and abilities to assist the organization in its goals (Bass, 1985), or increasing their own



capabilities and confidence (Liden et al., 2008), driving ethical growth (Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes, & Salvador, 2009), or perhaps simply creating meaning. It is plausible that leadership most effectively drives performance and other outcomes through giving followers a sense of meaning and purpose (Podolny et al., 2010), and empirical evidence has supported the idea that such meaning-driven leadership, even without a performance-focus, can significantly drive performance both at the micro (Judge et al., 2004; Walumbwa et al., 2011) and macro (de Luque et al., 2008; Ogden & Watson, 1999) levels.

This idea that leadership may most effectively enhance performance through its emphasis on improving the lives and abilities of others is not a new one. Henri Fayol, for instance, best known for his task-oriented theories on the functions of management (Fayol, 1917), emphasized the importance of creating satisfaction and a sense of fairness in a leader's subordinates, saying specifically that, "For the personnel to be encouraged to carry out its duties with all the devotion and loyalty of which it is capable it must be treated with kindness, and equity results from the combination of kindness and justice" (Fayol, 1949: p. 38). It is important to note that while Fayol saw kindness and justice as worthy ends unto themselves, they were not the end of his causal chain. It was through this caring that subordinates were motivated to perform at their highest levels via a mechanism of reciprocation (Gouldner, 1960), with a level of effort that could not be inspired through incentives or punishments. This perspective is also supported by recent work on the concepts of agency and communion (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Grant & Gino, 2010) which suggests that the benefits of each would not be limited to just self or others, respectively, if goals are consistent and interdependent. Building communal values in employees, for instance, can motivate them to build their own capabilities to better serve their team, benefitting both themselves and others in a cooperative and prosocial manner (Van Lange, 1999).

The primal importance of a positive leader-follower relationship serves as the basis for more modern theories such as LMX (Liden & Graen, 1980) and the emerging literature on leadership co-creation by leaders and followers (Shamir, 2007) and leader and follower identities

(DeRue & Ashford, 2010). And as recent findings in the literature on positive psychological capital (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007a), as well as empirical research on authentic (Wang, Sui, Luthans, Wang, & Wu, 2014), ethical (Brown et al., 2005), and servant leadership (Hu & Liden, 2011) have all demonstrated, organization members are motivated to give their all for leaders when they view leadership as person-focused, admirable, and/or developmental. Beyond these specific approaches, even simple displays of manager humility (Owens & Hekman, 2012) or treating all group members equally (Wu, Tsui, & Kinicki, 2010) can have meaningful positive effects on performance outcomes. As Hackman (2010) argued, leadership may be most accurately described as a process of indirect influence, molding the culture and outlook of an organization, and through that influence, meaningfully changing the attitudes and behaviors of all organization members. Therefore, I argue that leadership behaviors may be oriented toward a variety of outcomes, with immediate performance being only one of them.

### **2.2.2 Positive organizational change**

Consistent with the work of Yukl and colleagues (e.g. Yukl, 2010; Yukl, Gordon, & Taber, 2002), it is feasible that effective and complete leadership contains more than just emphases on people and immediate performance (cf. Giampetro-Meyer et al., 1998), but must also entail an orientation toward positive and meaningful change (Kotter, 1996). The achievement of future positive, meaningful change implies the existence of a communicable and motivating vision, an idea which occurs frequently in the literature on leadership and is related to both effectiveness and leader capacity to implement change (Grant, 2012; Larwood, Falbe, Kriger, & Miesing, 1995; Westley & Mintzberg, 1989). Although this idea would be outside of the classic distinction of leadership behaviors as oriented toward consideration or structure (Judge et al., 2004), the idea of driving change through vision has been a vital component of many leadership paradigms, most visibly charismatic leadership (Conger & Kanungo, 1987) and the intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation dimensions of transformational leadership (Avolio & Bass, 1991).

### **2.2.3 Stakeholder concerns**

Evidence is also accumulating that effective leadership 'should' include, to continue the theme of this section, an emphasis on stakeholders beyond the traditional subordinates, team, and organization. This emphasis on working for the good of society, alongside a focus on profits and performance, is a growing expectation of modern leaders (Nohria & Khurana, 2010; Rosenthal, 2011; Servaes & Tamayo, 2013), but generally ignored in the more micro-level academic attention to leader behaviors which tend to focus on organizational performance, employee satisfaction, and more recently, general ethical behaviors (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Mayer et al., 2009). As the information age progresses and the activities of leaders become increasingly visible both within and outside of organizations, attention and scrutiny to management activities has grown exponentially and in correspondence with growing demands that organizational leaders help, or at least not harm, external stakeholders. This movement was predicted by our early scholars: Selznick (1957), for instance, spoke to the importance of leadership converting an organization to an institution by infusing it with values and purpose, beneficial to all, that members find personally coherent and meaningful. Weber (1946), similarly, lamented the onset of impersonal and bureaucratic organizations and institutions which would replace concern for others. In short, both organizational insiders and outsiders desire organizations to be socially responsible, and such organizations should gain relative advantages from supporting these stakeholders.

Empirical studies confirm the importance of external stakeholder orientation, with an especially large and growing body of work found at the macro level of research. Organizations led and guided by concern for stakeholders such as communities, customers, and the natural environment encounter easier access to capital (Cheng, Ioannou, & Serafeim, 2014) and quality employees (Greening & Turban, 2000), learning and innovation capabilities (Sharma & Vredenburg, 1998), higher product quality (Agle, Mitchell, & Sonnenfeld, 1999), and greater financial performance (de Luque et al., 2008). Individuals exhibit preferences to work for leaders

who prioritize stakeholder concerns, providing competitive recruiting advantages to such organizations (Agle et al., 1999), and once employed develop relatively strong organizational commitment (Maignan, Ferrell, & Hult, 1999) and high levels of performance (Jones, 2010).

In line with my earlier arguments, the attractive outcomes of stakeholder orientations in and of themselves do not mandate their inclusion in a definition of leadership. But in a discussion of what leadership *should* be, it seems apparent that concern for stakeholders, and behaviors oriented toward them, are consistent with both the process of leadership and its outcome orientations. If we consider the process of leadership as playing out through influence behaviors, leader attention to stakeholder needs may aid this process as it increases members' trust, commitment, and engagement with the leader (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). And if leadership behaviors are conducted in order to improve the development and well-being of followers, enhance organizational performance, and lay the groundwork for meaningful and positive organizational change, stakeholder concern would seem to contribute to all of these outcomes by, respectively, infusing the leadership with meaning (Podolny et al., 2010), creating a positive context for organizational performance (de Luque et al., 2008), and by building the motivation and open-mindedness necessary for creative outcomes (Amabile, 1996; Maignan et al., 1999; Sharma & Vredenburg, 1998).

#### **2.2.4 A holistic approach to understanding leadership**

I therefore propose that a useful understanding of leadership might be one in which behaviors are directed toward multiple outcomes, including follower development and well-being, task/goal accomplishment, meaningful and positive organizational change, and helping (or at least not harming) external stakeholders. Such an approach builds communal motivations to help the organization and other stakeholders, and agentic motivations and skills to develop oneself and perform at high levels. Whereas immediate increments to performance have typically been assumed to be the main outcomes of leadership behaviors, or at least the most frequently studied

in empirical research (Podolny et al., 2010), it is periodically appropriate for scientists to readdress their assumptions, as pointed out by House and colleagues:

"Scientific knowledge progresses when scholars try to push the envelope of the existing knowledge and focus on new problems or new ways of addressing old problems. Any scholar who claims that his or her method is the only way and nothing else is of any value, without presenting rigorous scientific evidence, is trying desperately to hang on to the past and to prevent the future." (House, Javidan, Dorfman, & De Luque, 2006)

Whereas an emphasis on 'getting things done' is certainly an important component to understanding leadership, it cannot be the only one. This argument also holds for the importance of follower well-being, change, and support for stakeholders: a full understanding of effective leadership behaviors should not be devoted to the enhancement of any alone.

Leadership behaviors might be generally understood as behaviors of influence within relationships, motivated by orientations to benefit or further the aims of stakeholders.

Organizational goals (or organization owners/stockholders) would certainly be prevalent among these stakeholders, but not necessarily most proximal and certainly not the only stakeholders of importance. Even if they were considered to be of foremost importance, evidence is growing that the most effective way to reach organizational and stockholder goals is through caring for and developing subordinates (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999) and stakeholders (de Luque et al., 2008), infusing the organization with meaning and transforming it into a powerful institution (Selznick, 1957). Indeed, these mechanisms may be what differentiates leadership from management or simple organizational coordination (Meindl, 1995). After all, there are many activities and behaviors that can increase performance without having any real positive impact on others, or which only affect performance in the short-term. As Hackman (2010) has pointed out, we have tended to call many of these 'leadership,' making the construct little more than an attribution.

Is there any understanding of leadership, then, from which we can derive a more direct and concise theory, to represent what academics and practitioners alike agree that leadership *should* be? Burns' (1978) original conceptualization of the 'transforming' leader aligns surprisingly well with ideas of performance, change, and follower and stakeholder orientation,

but modern models of charismatic and transformational leadership as we currently discuss and study them do not fit these criteria. Despite the constructs' undeniable usefulness and fruitfulness over the past few decades (i.e. Judge & Piccolo, 2004), they entail concern for neither followers (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Walumbwa et al., 2010) nor stakeholders (Stephens et al., 1995). Again, these approaches certainly have significant merit as paradigms of leadership, but growing concern with their theory (or lack thereof) and application (Nohria & Khurana, 2010; Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013; Yukl, 1999), as well as their lack of fit with these effective leadership orientations, leads one to question whether they truly are leadership as it 'should' be. What approach, then, should the researcher interested in leadership use? Where should he or she start?

I propose that an academic understanding of the concept of servant leadership, as it was originally theorized (Greenleaf, 1970), aligns quite well with all of these criteria for what leadership 'should' be. I acknowledge that there are multiple conceptions and operationalizations of servant leadership in the academic literature (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Ehrhart, 2004; Liden et al., 2008; Sendjaya, Sarros, & Santora, 2008; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2010), most of them entailing not quite all of these criteria and some, according to Van Dierendonck (2011), lacking adequate theoretical development. Despite this, I contend that the concept of servant leadership as originally presented, and as a theory-in-use (Zaltman, LeMasters, & Heffring, 1982), is an excellent fit for this idea of what leadership should be. As will be discussed in the following section, Greenleaf's development of the construct certainly qualifies as a representative example of theory-in-use (Hunt, 2002; Zaltman et al., 1982), but it is not by itself precise and testable theory. Theory on servant leadership has begun to emerge linking it to various antecedents and outcomes (see Liden et al., 2014a, for recent work on theory development). One of the goals of this dissertation is to integrate this work to build a theory of servant leadership process and outcomes, but it is useful to first review the extant literature on this construct. In the following section I begin by examining core definitions proposed for servant leadership. I then review the

recent academic literature on the topic, before returning to Greenleaf's original writings on and conceptualization of the servant-as-leader.

## CHAPTER 3

### UNDERSTANDING SERVANT LEADERSHIP

#### 3.1 The conceptual vagueness of servant leadership

The idea of servant leadership, or the "servant-as-leader" as its creator preferred (Greenleaf, 1977), has since its conception been a difficult one to nail down. Like general leadership, an exact definition of the servant leadership construct seems to depend overmuch on who is asked. One reason for this issue is that although Greenleaf wrote in depth and frequently about the topic (Greenleaf, 1977, 1996a, b, 1998), he never explicitly defined servant leadership behaviors in a concise or theoretical manner. Indeed, he admits in an early collection of essays on servant leadership that such a clear definition would be very difficult (1977), and later notes that "One of the marvelous and frustrating things about servant leadership is that it is not a tidy how-to checklist. It is a philosophy that embraces certain principles but few prescriptions" (Greenleaf, 1996a). What is clear in all of his writings, though, is that servant leadership is best viewed not as a loosely related group of characteristics, but rather as a set of connected behaviors emerging from an overall mindset of a manager, which naturally leads him or her to engage in consistent activities. Greenleaf's most frequently cited description of servant leadership is one that is unfortunately dependent upon its outcomes:

"Do those being served grow as persons: do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will she or he benefit, or at least, not be further deprived?" (Greenleaf, 1977)

In a follow-up essay, Greenleaf (1996a) added one additional condition to servant leadership: that the servant leader's actions would not knowingly harm any others, directly nor indirectly. This requirement does not preclude a leader's use of discipline, accountability, or performance reviews which are sometimes considered "necessary evils" of leading people (Margolis & Molinsky,



2008); rather, it indicates a leader's cognizance of and responsibility for the consequences of his or her actions (Greenleaf, 1996a).

This provides a good idea of servant leadership's outcomes, but is less helpful in determining the behaviors of servant leadership on which to build a more precise definition. As a result of this, the scholarly body of work on servant leadership is plagued with numerous operationalizations, and dimensional structures for servant leadership, with historically little agreement on meaning and theoretical frameworks (van Dierendonck, 2011). Although there is a surprisingly large body of research in which various authors propose new componential structures and accompanying measures (e.g. Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Liden et al., 2008; Russell & Stone, 2002; Sendjaya et al., 2008; Spears, 1995; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2010), several of which specifically reference need for measurement of the servant leadership "theory," relatively few authors have attempted to conceptually define the construct or explain what that theory might be. Indeed, it is worthy to note that in most of these papers, as well as subsequent reviews and empirical studies (e.g. Liden et al., 2014a; Ng, Koh, & Goh, 2008; Owens & Hekman, 2012; van Dierendonck et al., 2013), it is exceedingly rare to encounter an actual, explicit, conceptual definition of servant leadership.

One of the earliest attempts at a clear, concise definition emerged in Laub's (1999) dissertation on the topic, wherein he suggested that servant leadership is "an understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader." Other authors have expanded on this definition, such as Hale and Fields' (2007) addition that it "emphasizes leader behaviors that focus on follower development, and de-emphasizing glorification of the leader." The former chairman of the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, Larry Spears, has called it "a model that identifies serving others - including employees, customers, and community - as the number-one priority" (Spears, 2002; p. 4). Adapting from Greenleaf, Ehrhart (2004: p. 68) suggested that the basis of servant leadership is that such a leader would acknowledge "his or her moral responsibility not only to the success of the organization

but also to his or her subordinates, the organization's customers, and other organizational stakeholders." More recently, Schaubroeck and colleagues (2011) explained servant leadership as "a group-oriented approach to leadership that emphasizes serving others, building a sense of community, emphasizing teamwork, and sharing power." Although useful, these definitions are inconsistent on several key points, and still remain somewhat vague in their use of general terms such as "practice of leadership" or "a model."

Rather than defining it, most scholars have instead attempted to isolate or reference a dimensional structure encompassing broad categories of behaviors or characteristics which should be connected to servant leadership (e.g. Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Laub, 1999; Sendjaya et al., 2008; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2010). These operational approaches to the construct share many factors in common, including direction, strong relationships with subordinates leading to their development and empowerment, leader ethical character, and humility (see van Dierendonck, 2011, for a review). As servant leadership has grown in academic prominence (as will be reviewed in the following section), some degree of consensus has arisen around two highly similar models of categories of servant leadership. The first considers servant leadership as being broadly represented by leader ethical behavior and prioritization of subordinate issues, breaking this down into seven categories of subordinate empowerment, subordinate development, ethical behaviors, conceptual skills, putting subordinates first, value creation for external stakeholders, and building relationships (Ehrhart, 2004). The second model of servant leadership differs only in that it replaces the final category of relationship-building with emotional healing, defined as empathy and sensitivity for the concerns of others (Liden et al., 2008).

However, these multi-part conceptions of servant leadership are more operational definitions than conceptual ones, which, while certainly useful for empirical methodology (Dodd & Shanas, 1943), are not equivalent to construct definitions (Weber, 1942). As Hempel once noted, operational definitions "constitute not a theory concerning the nature of scientific concepts but rather a program of development of such a theory" (Hempel, 1965). Therefore, for rigorous

theory-building and greater understanding of the construct, a definition beyond these multidimensional structures would seem appropriate. Given the confusion and disagreement within the field on this issue, as well as the noted fact that scholars have historically varied in the degree to which their conceptualizations of servant leadership correspond with the original writings on the topic (van Dierendonck, 2011), I consider three important sources of information for developing such a definition: first, a more general understanding of what leadership, by itself, represents (as it seems unreasonable to attempt to define any *form* of leadership without first considering the composition of the core construct); second, facets of servant leadership agreed upon by subject-matter-expert researchers; and finally, the writings of Greenleaf (as the original creator of the concept). The preceding section reviewed relevant material on more general leadership - in the next, I discuss the academic approach to servant leadership.

### **3.2 Scholarly approaches to servant leadership**

#### **3.2.1 Early work on servant leadership**

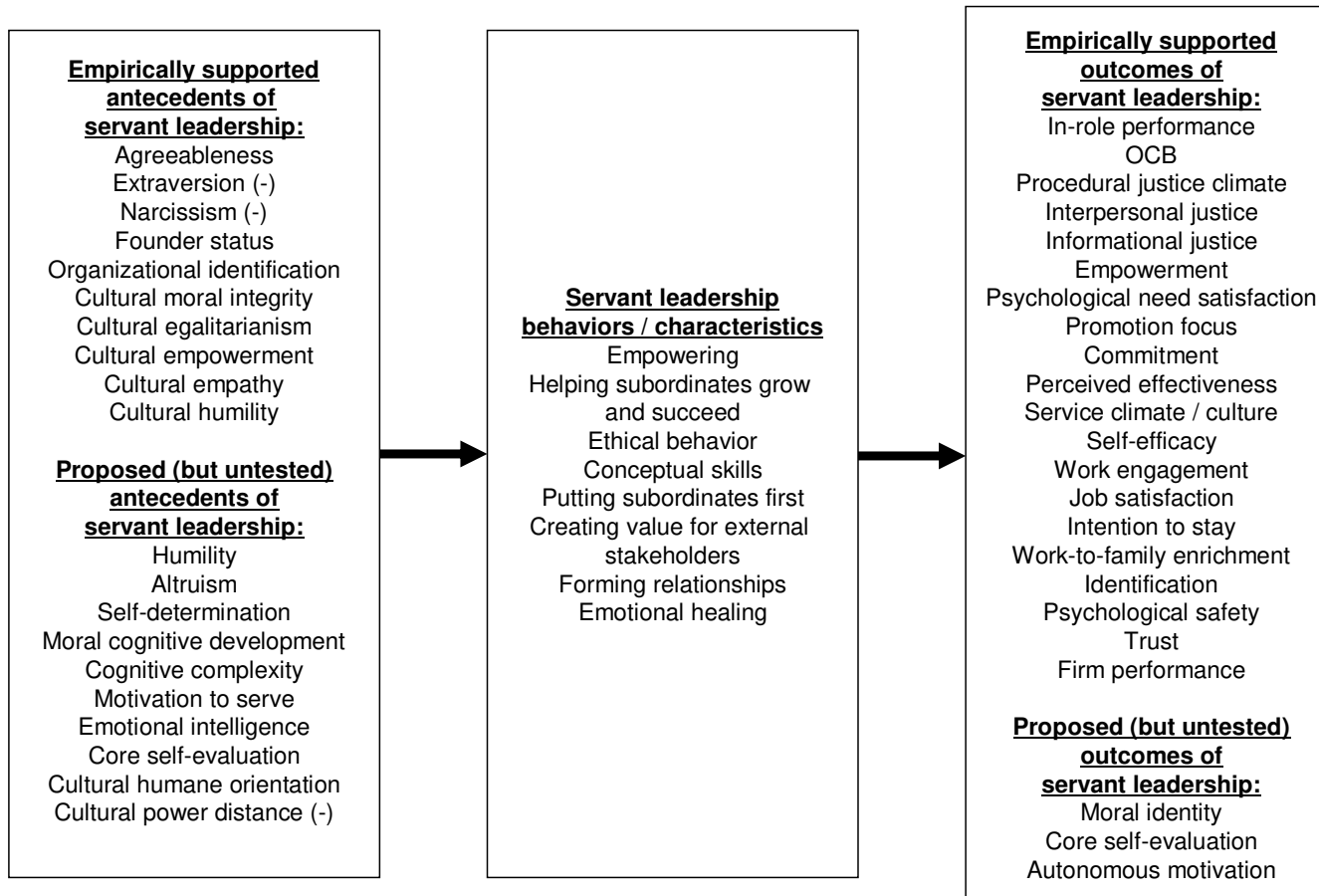
Compared to the overwhelming body of literature on general leadership (Neider & Schriesheim, 2002) and its long life in more practitioner-oriented arenas (Greenleaf, 1970), scholarly study on servant leadership is still quite young. A recent review of this academic literature found only 14 papers on the topic in peer-reviewed journals (with few in journals considered high-impact), many proposing wholly different dimensional structures and operationalizations for the construct (van Dierendonck, 2011). This review found that the limited papers available mostly focused on competing conceptualizations of servant leadership, with varying quality and connection to Greenleaf's original work, but found promise in the emerging empirical findings. These papers successfully related different measures of servant leadership to several outcomes of organizational interest, including job performance (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006), organizational citizenship behaviors (Ehrhart, 2004), trust in the leader (Reinke, 2003), and perceptions of justice (Mayer, Bardes, & Piccolo, 2008), across a variety of cultures and contexts. However, van Dierendonck stated in his review (2011) that much of this literature was

both based on non-validated servant leadership instruments with unstable (or untested) dimensional structures, and cross-sectional, with frequent convenience samples, potentially biased measurement, and the possible presence of common method variance biases (Richardson, Simmering, & Sturman, 2009; van Dierendonck, 2011). A subsequent burst of new studies seems to have been spurred both by this review and the creation and validation of a scale by Robert Liden and his colleagues (2008). As Van Dierendonck's review does an excellent job of summarizing the research on servant leadership to that point, I focus here on discussing more recent studies, with more consistent operationalizations of servant leadership, which were not discussed in that review. Nearly all of the following research measured servant leadership using either the Ehrhart (2004) or Liden et al. (2008) scales, which in turn were developed using the operational definitions described previously. The current theoretical propositions and empirical findings regarding servant leadership, as established by the extant research, are summarized in Figure 1. Note that most scholarly consideration of servant leadership has not yet considered its moderators and boundary conditions; all relationships illustrated are linear main effects.

### **3.2.2 Servant leadership across cultures**

The idea of servant leadership seems to resonate with scholars in both the West and East, with research supporting servant leadership's effects across cultural contexts including China (Hu & Liden, 2011), Kenya (Walumbwa et al., 2010), Turkey (Öner, 2012), Italy (Bobbio, Manganelli, & van Dierendonck, 2012), Indonesia (Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010), Pakistan (Choudhary, Akhtar, & Zaheer, 2013), and the Netherlands (van Dierendonck et al., 2013). In a more cross-cultural approach, data from the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness studies (i.e. GLOBE; House, 2004) were used to test how servant leadership and its component behaviors and orientations are viewed by managers and their subordinates across different world cultures (Mittal & Dorfman, 2012). Overall, servant leadership (considered by these researchers as encompassing egalitarianism, moral integrity, empowering and developing others, empathy, humility, and stakeholder orientation) was consistently viewed as both appropriate and important worldwide,

**FIGURE 1:**  
**Current findings regarding servant leadership**



Servant leadership behaviors and characteristics taken from models by Ehrhart (2004), Liden and colleagues (2008). All are present in both models except "Forming relationships" (unique to Ehrhart) and "Emotional healing" (unique to Liden).

Variables marked by (-) indicate negative linear relationships.

regardless of culture. There was some variance across cultures in the degree of endorsement of varying facets of servant leadership, however; for instance, leader empathy and humility were seen as more appropriate in the more collectivistic Eastern cultures, whereas values of egalitarianism and empowerment fit best with the more individualistic West (Hofstede, 1980; Mittal & Dorfman, 2012).

A similar question of servant leadership's cultural fit was addressed in the Turkish study, which questioned whether it might, in that context, be confused with paternalistic leadership (Den Hartog, 2004), which shares its reliance on nurturing and developing subordinates but does so in an autocratic and untrusting style. This study combined items from multiple measures of servant leadership in a correlational design, and concluded that white-collar managers in Turkey might initially view servant leadership with suspicion due to its perceived connection to such paternalistic leadership (Öner, 2012), conceivably related to Turkey's high power distance, in-group collectivism, and paternalism. This supports the idea that implicit theories of what leadership is and should be, often driven by context (such as organizational or national cultures), may alter responses to that leadership (Lord, Foti, & de Vader, 1984). This suggests a need to study the possible boundary conditions of servant leadership.

### **3.2.3 Servant leadership and transformational leadership**

One particular area of interest for the budding servant leadership literature seems to be its comparison to the dominant paradigm of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985) in predicting outcomes. This research often echoes themes first introduced by Jill Graham (1991), who positioned servant leader behaviors and motivations as essential extensions of transformational leadership due to the latter's lack of any ethical basis, and its emphasis on driving follower motivations toward whatever ends the leader and organization feel appropriate (cf. Bass, 1985; Bass, 1990; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). As servant leadership is a relatively new academic construct, scholars have sought to confirm its usefulness by showing how it predicts important leadership outcomes above and beyond the standard transformational approaches. Three studies

comparing the transformational and servant paradigms are particularly worthy of note. First, Schaubroeck and colleagues (2011) studied both forms of leadership in a cross-sectional design within a large financial firm with branches in both Hong Kong and the US, using the Liden (2008) measure for servant leadership. They found that while both transformational and servant leadership were related to team performance, they worked through different forms of trust and different team constructs to attain it. Transformational leadership drove a trust in the leader based on cognition, leading to feelings of team potency, whereas servant leadership worked through affect-based trust in the leader and feelings of psychological safety. The authors found that servant leadership explained an additional 10% of variance in team performance over and above that predicted by transformational leadership, and that the servant-related mediator of psychological safety explained nearly twice as much performance variance as did the transformational mediator of potency.

In a similar research approach, Van Dierendonck and his colleagues (2013) compared how the servant and transformational approaches related to follower outcomes and perceptions of effectiveness using a multi-study design involving both experiments and a field survey protocol. They discovered persistent evidence that both approaches to leadership positively impacted feelings of work engagement, organizational commitment, and perceived leader effectiveness. Servant leadership had a unique mediator to these outcomes in the form of psychological need satisfaction, which has also been shown to mediate this relationship for other follower-focused forms of leadership (Leroy, Anseel, Gardner, & Sels, 2012). Transformational leadership was a stronger driver of perceived leader effectiveness than servant leadership (as measured by Ehrhart's scale), although both approaches did predict this outcome. This study replicated previous evidence that transformational and servant approaches are conceptually distinct and work through different processes, while building support for servant leadership's unique influence on psychological well-being (Ehrhart, 2004; Graham, 1991; Liden et al., 2008; van Dierendonck et al., 2013).

The two leadership approaches were also compared in a study of leadership within purely voluntary service clubs (Schneider & George, 2011). Although this research was based on a small sample with same-source ratings, it is fairly unique in its focus on organizations wholly dependent upon volunteerism, rather than the more traditional and commonly studied for-profit enterprises with paid employees. Within this context, both transformational and servant leadership (measured with the Ehrhart scale) were related to intention to stay, commitment, and satisfaction when considered alone, but only servant leadership retained its significance in regard to these outcomes when both were regressed simultaneously. This led the authors to conclude that servant leadership was of primal importance in such contexts, working through their supported mediating variable of member empowerment.

#### **3.2.4 New outcomes of servant leadership**

Other researchers have focused their efforts relating servant leadership to outcomes unique to its theoretical premise. One such outcome is work-family enrichment, defined as a beneficial transference of moods and skills from work roles to family roles, a positive spillover resulting in greater well-being or role quality (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Servant leadership, measured using Barbuto and Wheeler's (2006) scale, was found to drive this outcome through its impact on organizational identification in a multi-organizational Chinese sample, due to a transfer of servant behaviors and positive affect from work to home life (Zhang, Kwong Kwan, Everett, & Jian, 2012). Other recent empirical studies have successfully linked servant leadership to the development of challenging work conditions (Asag-Gau & van Dierendonck, 2011) and perceptions of informational and interpersonal justice (Kool & van Dierendonck, 2012).

Hunter and colleagues (2013), in a cross-sectional study of a major American retail chain, tested servant leadership's impact on a variety of organizational outcomes through a mediating variable of climate for service (Schneider, Ehrhart, & Macey, 2010). This study, which used the Ehrhart measure to capture both individual-level and team-level servant leadership, unfortunately suffered from poor interrater agreement in most of its aggregated team-level constructs (e.g.



service climate  $r_{wg(j)} = .56$ ), and used selling behaviors as rated by the researchers themselves as a primary outcome. Nonetheless, support was found for the hypotheses that servant leadership led to OCB, intention to stay, engagement, and those selling behaviors. No link was found between servant leadership (nor its resultant climate) and objective sales performance. In a somewhat rare look at predictors of servant leadership, this study also found consistent support for a *negative* relationship between manager extraversion and ratings of servant leadership, in contrast to the positive relationship usually found between extraversion and more general leadership emergence and effectiveness (e.g. Grant, Gino, & Hofmann, 2011; Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002; Phillips & Bedeian, 1994).

Despite the notorious difficulty of measuring and evaluating leadership in top organizational executives (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007; Resick, Weingarden, Whitman, & Hiller, 2009), a recent study examined the servant leadership of CEOs in small technology companies in the western US, using their CFOs as key informants to their behaviors (Peterson et al., 2012). This sample is especially meaningful for study of the servant leadership approach, as organizational heads are in the best position to make the kind of meaningful institutional change sought by Greenleaf in his justification of the servant-as-leader concept (Greenleaf, 1970). This temporally lagged research, which used an adapted 16-item version of the Liden scale, found that even when controlling for prior performance and the presence of transformational leadership behaviors, CEO servant leadership had a significant positive effect on a firm's return on assets (a vital measure of performance for small companies). This finding is made more meaningful by the lack of consistent evidence for CEO leadership styles affecting firm performance in other research (e.g. Agle, Nagarajan, Sonnenfeld, & Srinivasan, 2006; Waldman, Ramirez, House, & Puranam, 2001). The authors proposed that servant leadership might have unique beneficial impact due to its effect on stakeholder/community well-being and subsequent boosts to firm external image (Liden et al., 2008; McGuire, Sundgren, & Schneeweis, 1988) and enhanced employee effort due to reciprocity of positive treatment (Gouldner, 1960; van Dierendonck et al.,

2013). This hypothesis was supported, mirroring and extending previous research showing a link between CEO stakeholder orientation, a component of servant leadership, and firm performance (de Luque et al., 2008). This research also investigated predictors of CEO servant leadership, finding that company founders were more likely to act as servant leaders, whereas more narcissistic executives were less likely (Peterson et al., 2012).

### **3.2.5 Mechanisms of servant leadership's impact**

Research into new outcomes of servant leadership has thus far been fruitful, but perhaps the most study since Van Dierendonck's (2011) review has been directed toward the mechanisms, or mediators, of servant leadership's effects on those outcomes. Although not encompassing all proposed mediators, most research has examined either a team climate or trust in the leader as mechanisms by which such leadership operates. The interest in the former has been a long-standing one in relation to servant leadership, as several of the academic works considered central to the current understanding of servant leadership specifically reference its potential to build a positive psychological climate (e.g. Ehrhart, 2004; Liden et al., 2008; van Dierendonck, 2011). This relationship between servant leadership and climate is theorized to emerge as a servant leader's behaviors slowly create a norm within a team or organization regarding the importance of serving others, often using social learning (Bandura, 1977b) arguments to explain why followers would emulate a leader's behavior.

The most commonly used climate has been a 'service climate,' referring to "employees' shared perceptions of the policies, practices, and procedures that are rewarded, supported, and expected concerning customer service" (Schneider, Salvaggio, & Subirats, 2002: p. 222). This climate was found to mediate servant leadership's impact on organizational citizenship behaviors in a multi-organizational Kenyan sample using Ehrhart's measure (Walumbwa et al., 2010), as well as outcomes of turnover intention and sales behavior (Hunter et al., 2013). Other researchers have used the slightly different mediator of "serving culture," a broader construct not limited to customer service, referring to norms and expectations around generally helping one another

(Liden et al., 2014b). This construct was studied in conjunction with a shortened version of the Liden scale in a US restaurant chain, and measured using the same scale altered to refer to the team environment with a referent-shift methodology (Chan, 1998). Serving culture mediated servant leadership's effects on a range of performance outcomes, with positive relations to performance, creativity, customer satisfaction, and order accuracy (Liden et al., 2014b).

Perhaps the most commonly referenced and studied mediator of servant leadership's impact on organizational performance outcomes is trust, defined as "the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party" (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; p. 712). Trust is a natural component of a relational approach to leadership, frequently theorized as making a follower more likely to accept a leader's influence attempts as the follower trusts that acting in line with the leader will be in his or her long-term best interest (Burke, Sims, Lazzara, & Salas, 2007; Colquitt, Scott, & LePine, 2007), while the leader trusts the follower to work with appropriate effort and, perhaps, proactivity. Trust may be somewhat rare in leader-follower relationships (Chaleff, 2008), but a servant-as-leader approach in which leaders make follower well-being a visible priority should aid in its development (Liden et al., 2008). Ehrhart (2004) may have been the first to suggest an empirical link between these two concepts, after his successful demonstration of procedural justice climate (a group's collective impression of how fairly they are treated; Naumann & Bennett, 2000) as a mediating mechanism between servant leadership and OCB. More recently, trust has been supported as a mediator linking servant leadership to team psychological safety and performance (Schaubroeck et al., 2011), team potency and performance (Hu & Liden, 2011), and job satisfaction (Chan & Mak, 2014), and as a simple outcome of servant leadership (Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010). All of these studies were cross-sectional, occurring in China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, and the US, and all used the Liden 2008 scale with the exception of Sendjaya and Perkerti's study, which used Sendjaya's own measure (2008) representing servant leadership as

subordination, authenticity, relationship-forming, morality, spirituality, and transforming influence.

### **3.2.6 Other approaches to servant leadership**

A relatively recent paper on 'humble leadership' (Owens & Hekman, 2012) is also worthy of note in that servant leadership is frequently referenced in the construct's development, and as humility is an essential component of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970; van Dierendonck, 2011) not well represented in other approaches to leadership. This qualitative study set out to challenge the prevailing, traditional 'heroic' and top-down views of leadership (Bass, 1985; Conger & Kanungo, 1987) by providing inductive evidence for a less authoritative approach marked by leader humility and learning. Rather than depending on charisma and firm direction, a humble leader boosts performance by highlighting and empowering followers, prioritizing their development, and serving as a model for open-minded learning. These behaviors have all been established as falling within the schema of servant leadership behaviors, although they do not include other dimensions such as concern for extra-organizational stakeholders and ethical behaviors (van Dierendonck, 2011). A humble approach to leadership composed of these behaviors, which worked well when leaders were viewed as competent and sincere (both prerequisites of servant leaders; see Greenleaf, 1970; Liden et al., 2008), boosted feelings of psychological safety and provided a favorable environment for learning and growth. Leader humility may also boost follower commitment, as "followers of humble leaders are less likely to experience *disillusionment*—and the associated mistrust, disloyalty, contempt, and dissatisfaction—with their leader over time because the leader never tried to create any *illusions* to begin with" (italics in original; Owens & Hekman, 2012, p. 807).

In a somewhat unique research approach combining economic and evolutionary perspectives on psychology, Gillet and colleagues (2011) used an experimental design to test the competing cognitive hypotheses that leadership is either a vehicle by which individuals can dominate others, or a vehicle used by groups to operate more effectively. The researchers found

backing for the latter proposition using weak-link games (Van Huyck, Battalio, & Beil, 1990), claiming support for the idea of servant leadership. Effective team leadership emerged even when there were known costs to being a leader; that is, leaders personally experienced less benefit than their followers (and they were aware this could happen before they stepped into the leadership roles), but groups as a whole benefitted from their leadership. Individuals with values oriented toward others emerged more often as leaders than those with values oriented toward themselves in this context. The authors concluded that leadership can act as a group-level social good, with servant leadership being a highly appropriate perspective through which to study such group phenomena (Gillet et al., 2011).

Other scholars, hoping to build theoretical understanding of the construct, have sought to build frameworks linking servant leadership to ethical leadership (Reed, Vidaver-Cohen, & Colwell, 2011) and the budding literature on positive organizational behavior (Searle & Barbuto, 2011). Two reviews of servant leadership have also emerged since van Dierendonck's 2011 paper. The first focused its efforts on reviewing empirical findings on servant leadership; the authors review 27 papers and note servant leadership's consistent positive impacts on organizational effectiveness and follower well-being, while reporting that many of these studies had methodological flaws and inconsistent operationalization (Parris & Peachey, 2013). The second review used the existing literature on servant leadership to propose certain antecedents and mediators, including several individual differences as predictors and trust, empowerment, motivation, commitment, and follower identity and core self-evaluation as mechanisms (Liden et al., 2014a).

Thus, there has been a great deal of meaningful academic research in the past few years on the topic of servant leadership with a growing consensus around operational definitions of servant leadership. But as some of the most prolific scholars in this domain have repeatedly pointed out (Liden et al., 2014a; Liden et al., 2014b), most of this work is purely empirical; rigorous theory development of servant leadership explaining its mechanisms and boundary

conditions remains somewhat lacking. In order to continue unraveling the conceptual meaning of servant leadership, I next turn to the writings of the concept's creator.

### **3.3 Greenleaf's approach to servant leadership**

#### **3.3.1 The originator of the servant leadership concept**

Robert K. Greenleaf (1904-1990) was a businessman, consultant, and philosopher originally from the American Midwest. Inspired by one of his undergraduate professors to work toward the betterment of modern institutions and organizations for all society, he explicitly sought for his first job to work at the largest employer in the world: the American Telephone & Telegraph company, now known as AT&T. To achieve this goal he accepted a position as a common laborer despite his college education, but within a year was promoted to help lead the company's first attempts at management training. He rose through the organizational ranks rapidly for the next forty years, eventually becoming AT&T's first director of management research. After his retirement, Greenleaf enjoyed a second career that lasted another 25 years as a highly influential consultant, author, and speaker, specializing in an idea that he'd developed during his time at AT&T: the premise that organizational leadership positions, when held by people with motivations and values directed at serving others, could benefit not only their own organizations but also broader institutions and society (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2002). To aid in the advocacy of this new approach to management, he founded in 1964 a nonprofit "Center for Applied Ethics," which operates today as the Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership. Greenleaf died in 1990, and the humility that led him to develop the idea of the servant-as-leader is aptly represented in his chosen epitaph: "Potentially a good plumber; ruined by a sophisticated education" (Frick, 2004).

#### **3.3.2 Greenleaf's "servant-as-leader"**

Greenleaf considered the servant-as-leader as a response to his concerns that people and society were becoming increasingly devoid of hope, a characteristic he considered necessary for fulfilling and quality life (Greenleaf, 1998). He believed society, through its guiding institutions,

was losing a degree of care for both individual and common good, and that this degeneration could only be corrected by installing leaders in those institutions who thought of themselves more as servants than as leaders (Greenleaf, 1977, 1998). This is often misinterpreted to indicate a weak leader or one who is subject to the whims of his subordinates (Johnson, 2001). This was emphatically not the case in Greenleaf's writings, however, as he frequently mentions the need for a servant-leader to push subordinates to higher performance levels (Greenleaf, 1977), to keep a "tough attitude" to get things done (Greenleaf, 1998), and "to say 'Do it now!' instead of 'Do it tomorrow, it'll be easier!'" (Greenleaf, 1996a). Being a servant, at least in the Greenleaf sense, entails neither a leader struggling with self-esteem, nor an abandonment of the power needed to gain the respect of co-workers (van Dierendonck, 2011). Rather, a servant approaches leadership as an opportunity to better the lives of others - a commitment to the improvement of those being led, the greater organization, and society as a whole (Reinke, 2003). Whereas hierarchies mandate service to those *above*, the servant-as-leader is also interested in serving those *below*; not because she is required to, but because she prefers to and sees it as a way to improve the lives of others. This core motivation, perhaps conceptualized as a motivation to serve (Ng et al., 2008), was theorized by Greenleaf as preventing the power of management from corrupting the servant-as-leader, and acting as the root driver of related servant behaviors. Such a servant, he posited, would be resistant to arrogance and care little for power, happy to share it as appropriate for the good of the team and organization (Greenleaf, 1998).

In addition, Greenleaf never mentioned any limits to the beneficiaries of this leader service, as he wrote about the importance of prioritizing others (beyond the leader him or herself) including subordinates, communities, families, society, and the employing organization (Greenleaf, 1977, 1996a, 1998). The stereotypical view of servant leadership is that in its emphasis on serving subordinates and stakeholders, it does not consider achieving organizational objectives to be important (Andersen, 2009; Heskett, 2013; Johnson, 2001). Although this misperception may be aided by structures of servant leadership which include task

accomplishment and goal attainment somewhat minimally (Ehrhart, 2004; Liden et al., 2008) or do not include them at all (Sendjaya et al., 2008), this is inconsistent with the model as originally proposed. While Greenleaf did strongly emphasize the importance of enhancing the well-being and development of followers, he also saw the role of the servant leader as one who "initiates, provides the ideas and the structure, and takes the risk of failure along with the chance of success" (Greenleaf, 1977; p. 29). Such a leader would always be prepared to communicate the team or organization goal and persuade any who were unsure of it as to why it needed to be done. Without an emphasis on organizational performance and growth, the organization would fail, an outcome that would be counter to the best interests of all stakeholders (Greenleaf, 1998). The servant leader, Greenleaf argued, took the organization's successes and failures very personally, and as a result would consistently and carefully examine routine processes within the organization, alongside his or her team, to determine how they could be made better (Greenleaf, 1996a). Vision and support for creative follower ideas to improve processes were named particularly important attributes of the servant leader (Greenleaf, 1977, 1996b): "An essential part of servant leadership is vision - it's required to open us to willingness to use what we know and to work to extract hard reality from a dream" (Greenleaf, 1998).

The servant leader would not let his or her team or organization fail, because to do so would be to eliminate opportunities for subordinates to grow, and opportunities for the team and organization to serve other internal and external constituents. This approach to leadership therefore views agentic and communal goals as interdependent and mutually beneficial. Consistent with modern approaches to agency and communion, the servant leader sees building agentic performance in subordinates, teams, and organization as essential to and inseparable from their overall goals of improving the conditions of others (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Grant & Gino, 2010). Agency does not necessarily benefit the self alone (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007); others may benefit as well, such as when an agentic trait like self-efficacy aids in performance of tasks directed toward communal goals, or interdependent goals in which both collectives and the



self benefit (Peeters, 2005). This benefit to others may be dependent upon the degree to which the focal individual is oriented to use their agentic skills to help others (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007), an orientation a servant leaders is driven to foster. This dual developmental outcome - influencing both another's motivation to help others, and their ability to do so - may therefore be central to models of how servant leadership affects others, as will be discussed later in this dissertation.

### **3.3.3 Servant leadership, religion, and philosophy**

It is worth mentioning that whereas the concept of servant leadership has often been linked with spirituality and the Christian faith, both in academia (e.g. Ng et al., 2008; Page & Wong, 2000) and more frequently in the popular press (e.g. Agosto, 2005; Blanchard & Hodges, 2003), it was not at all Greenleaf's intent that servant leadership be considered a predominantly spiritual exercise nor limited to those of any particular belief (Frick, 2004). Rather, he saw servant leadership as an approach to organizational stewardship that was beneficial for both the organization itself and society at large. While the concept has proven popular within religious institutions in both developed and undeveloped countries (Blanchard & Hodges, 2003; Fryar, 2001; Hale & Fields, 2007), the core belief that positive organizational practices are desirable is hardly unique to any one philosophy or religion. The idea that positive relationships exist between treating others well and desirable organizational outcomes is prevalent throughout management scholarship, such as within the research on justice (Colquitt et al., 2001), psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999), and the emerging positive organizational behavior literature (Cameron et al., 2003).

Greenleaf's Christian faith guided the development of the servant-as-leader idea (Frick, 2004), and Jesus Christ is often cited as the primary exemplar of servant leadership (Sendjaya et al., 2008). The "servant" title came not from Jesus, however, but from Hesse's *Journey to the East*, from which Greenleaf took his initial inspiration for the idea (Greenleaf, 1970). The servant concept, while well-represented in Christianity, is hardly unique to it; the importance of those in power remaining humble and serving others is an idea found in virtually all major world religions,

as well as non-religious philosophies of life (Kurth, 2003). For instance, Laozi (also known as Lao Tzu), the Chinese philosopher and founder of Taoism, wrote in the *Dao De Jing* of the humble and empowering leader:

"The highest type of rule is one of whose existence the people are barely aware. Next comes one whom they love and praise... The Sage is self-effacing and scanty of words. When his task is accomplished and things have been completed, all the people say, 'We ourselves have achieved it!'" (quoted in Rae & Witzel, 2004).

The founder of the Sikh religion, Guru Nanak Dev Ji, established service to others, especially service enacted by those in power toward those of lower status, as a core pillar of the faith through the values of *Vand Chhakna* and *Seva* (sharing and community service, respectively: "In the midst of this world, do selfless service, and you shall be given a place of honor in the Court of the Lord." - *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 26, lines 1-2). Similarly, a recent analytical study comparing servant leadership with Islamic leadership (as proposed by Muslim scriptures) found the two approaches matched quite well, especially in their mutual influence on ethical leader behaviors, empowerment, and service to others (Sarayrah, 2004). This is a representative but not exhaustive comparison of servant leadership with religion and philosophy; servant leadership does have connections with various religious and secular beliefs, just as other positive management concepts do, but servant leadership is itself neither inherently spiritual nor religious in nature (cf. Fry, Vitucci, & Cedillo, 2005; Sendjaya et al., 2008).

### **3.3.4 How Greenleaf might define servant leadership**

What, then, would Greenleaf say that servant leadership fundamentally is? He would answer, but likely not in a way that would be satisfactory to the academic theoretician. He might reply that the servant-as-leader is servant first, meaning that a person with a natural inclination to be a servant is driven to become a leader due to the opportunity to make positive impacts (Greenleaf, 1977). This answer seems to define servant leadership by its antecedents, so is of limited use from a theoretical standpoint. He might go on to insist that a servant leader is one who creates better followers, grows communities, improves organizations and institutions, and does no

harm to others (Greenleaf, 1996a), which is also of limited use as it defines the construct by its outcomes. When pressed to explain what behaviors a servant leader actually enacts, he might suggest that servant leadership has a lot do with persuading followers - but not coercing them - through words and deeds, of the value of service to community, employer, and each other (Greenleaf, 1998). Such behavior would revolve around what he called "seeking," or looking for a new vision and a better way of running things, while staying humble, exhibiting care for all around the leader, and keeping an open mind to the prospect of personal learning and change, thus exhibiting and managing to a sense of foresight (Greenleaf, 1998).

Greenleaf's conception of servant leadership has much in common with the academic literature on servant leadership, but shares even more similarities with the growing consensus as to what leadership as a whole should be, as reviewed in the previous sections. As discussed, leadership might ideally be understood as non-coercive influence behaviors, played out in high quality relationships, aimed at multiple ends including developing followers, improving their well-being, and increasing their motivation to engage in behaviors which benefit their teams, organizations, and other stakeholders (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Burns, 1978; Nohria & Khurana, 2010; Podolny et al., 2010; Yukl, 2010). This idea relates well to Greenleaf's original conceptualization of servant leadership, as well as to more modern understandings and structures of servant leadership. In the following sections, I attempt to integrate this research into a single, concise, theoretically appropriate definition of servant leadership.

### **3.3.5 Greenleaf as theory-in-use**

It is striking how similar Greenleaf's idea of servant leadership is to modern academic thought on how our understanding of effective leadership needs to evolve: both involve vision and an orientation toward meaningful, positive organizational change (Greenleaf, 1996b; Yukl, 2010); both involve prioritization of getting things done (Giampetro-Meyer et al., 1998; Greenleaf, 1998; Posner & Kouzes, 1988) through subordinate development and the creation of meaning (Greenleaf, 1977; Hackman, 2010; Selznick, 1984); both involve behaviors that

demonstrate concern for multiple stakeholders (Greenleaf, 1977; Nohria & Khurana, 2010); and both view ethics as essential to sustainable performance (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Greenleaf, 1977). The original concept of servant leadership seems nothing short of prophetic from this perspective.

An important question to consider, though, is how seriously that original concept should be taken from a theoretical standpoint. Greenleaf's work is explicitly not theory, as he himself admitted (Greenleaf, 1977) and as has been pointed out by the approach's proponents (Liden et al., 2014b) and its detractors (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). It might, however, be quite accurately described as a "theory-in-use" (during Greenleaf's AT&T years) and later as both theory-in-use and "espoused theory" (during his later consulting years; Argyris & Schon, 1974). An espoused theory is one that observers of action claim to hold as to what is the appropriate course for a given situation, whereas a theory-in-use is the theory which the practitioner actually uses. A theory-in-use is one developed inductively by an individual operating within and as part of the context of interest, over a significant amount of time, based on observation, testing, use, and subsequent feedback (Argyris & Schon, 1974). Practitioners, of course, do not usually consider this self-regulatory process to be formal theory-building; rather, it is simply a natural and rational method of determining the most effective and efficient way to attain their desired outcomes (Bandura, 1991). This process is nonetheless similar to that used by academic qualitative researchers in inductively building theory, and experienced practitioners' theories-in-use often serve as the most promising starting points for such studies (Gephart, 2004). Greenleaf's work certainly matches the definition of theory-in-use, as it was developed over many decades of leading, observing, training, consulting, and partnering with leaders and their followers (Frick, 2004).

Some theoreticians might look with disfavor on any theory developed without academic training or formal hypothesizing, but if all knowledge is indeed the "mapping of experienced reality by some observer" (Holzner, 1968), an important method of recording such knowledge is to study the maps held by those with relevant experiences (Zaltman et al., 1982). Greenleaf's

undergraduate degree was in mathematics (Frick, 2004), so he likely had little if any training in academic theory development; he was quite qualified throughout his career, however, to act as a qualitative observer and recorder of manager behavior, the results of which are frequently used as a first step in theory-building (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). Although insufficient on its own to become a final and formal scholarly theory, a theory-in-use is a very useful starting point as a map of experienced behavior and reality among individuals in organizations, especially when it is based on multiple observations in multiple contexts (Zaltman et al., 1982). Such theories are often testable, novel, and valid in at least a context-dependent sense (similar to middle-range theories; Merton, 1957), so long as they are coupled with rigorous operationalization and synthesis with the relevant literatures (Daft, 1983; Eisenhardt, 1989b). In this sense, one might argue that theories-in-use, when paired with rigorous scholarly development, serve as some of our most potentially generalizable, interesting, and practically useful contributions.

Whereas Greenleaf's ideas regarding the servant-as-leader provide an excellent starting point as a theory-in-use, they may not quite qualify as grounded theory-building, as they do not emerge from strict and controlled social science research methodology nor a careful consideration of the existing academic literature (Suddaby, 2006). His work does, however, arguably match two of the core requirements of grounded theory, in that he utilized both constant comparison (in which he collected and analyzed data simultaneously) and theoretical sampling (in which he was guided in the data he collected and considered by his evolving view of his theory-in-use of servant leadership) (Frick, 2004; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Greenleaf, 1998). It was not simply the fact that Greenleaf observed a wealth of data on successful and unsuccessful leader behaviors over the course of over six decades that qualifies his efforts as theory or theory-in-use (Sutton & Staw, 1995); rather, it is his analysis, interpretation, and explanation of relationships between his observed variables that makes his work worthy of some preliminary theoretical consideration. Greenleaf himself described his process in this manner, echoing principles of theory-in-use:

"One must, after some study and experience, hypothesize - but leave the hypothesis under a shadow of doubt. Then one acts on the hypothesis and examines the result. One continues to study and learn and periodically one reexamines the hypothesis itself." (Greenleaf, 1977; p. 28)

This represents an inductive approach to theory-building: observing and measuring the characteristics and relational qualities of a phenomenon across contexts, analyzing the resultant observations for patterns and noteworthy deviations, and after consistent patterns emerge, begin to formalize the patterns as statements of relationships (Reynolds, 1971).

For these reasons, I consider this original work on servant leadership to be an appropriate conceptualization of the topic on which to build a formal definition and subsequent theory.

### **3.4 A conceptual, behavioral definition of servant leadership**

How, then, can servant leadership be defined in a satisfactorily theoretical manner (cf. Parris & Peachey, 2013) - that is, not by its antecedents and not by its outcomes, parsimoniously, clearly, and distinctly from other constructs? Integrating Greenleaf's original theory-in-use (Greenleaf, 1977, 1996a) with current academic understandings of the construct (Ehrhart, 2004; Liden et al., 2014a; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2010), while considering current academic thought on what leadership might and should be overall (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Nohria & Khurana, 2010; Yukl, 2010), I leverage existing scholarship to propose the following definition: *Servant leadership is composed of influential behaviors, manifested humbly and ethically within relationships, oriented towards follower development, empowerment, and continuous and meaningful improvement for all stakeholders (including but not limited to those being led, communities, customers, and the leader, team, and organization themselves).* This definition is similar to those proposed by other scholars (Hale & Fields, 2007; Laub, 1999; Schaubroeck et al., 2011; Spears, 2002) in several respects, but contributes to them in two ways. First, it does not use the term "leadership" to define a form of leadership, reducing vagueness and confusion. Second, and more meaningfully, it adds the leader's team and organization to the list of stakeholders toward which servant leadership behaviors are aimed, explicitly allowing performance-oriented

components. It also adds the leader him or herself as a possible beneficiary of leadership, as the servant leader is interested in learning and developing herself as well as her followers, seeking wisdom and positioning herself to better serve others. Servant leaders learn alongside their teams, not separate from nor instead of them, and are open to learning and influence from those ranked above and below them (Graham, 1991; Greenleaf, 1970).

Although this concern with more performance-centric organizational goals (*in addition to*, but not *replacing*, concerns for followers and other stakeholders) is not present in the definitions cited above, its inclusion within a definition of servant leadership is far from unprecedented in the recent literature on the topic. Most prevalent dimensional structures of servant leadership, for instance, include conceptual skills relevant to the organization and the team's tasks (Ehrhart, 2004; Liden et al., 2008), a system of accountability to ensure that goals are accomplished (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2010), and growing the organization through effective stewardship (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Servant leaders feel a moral responsibility for organizational success (Ehrhart, 2004), push subordinates to envision new ways to more effectively and efficiently achieve goals (Graham, 1991), and strengthen a promotion-focus in those around them toward growing the organization (Neubert, Carlson, Roberts, Kacmar, & Chonko, 2008). Although some researchers have claimed that servant leadership is opposed to such organizational performance initiatives (Andersen, 2009; Whetstone, 2002) or that this approach to leadership focuses on maintaining the current status quo of organizational operations (Smith, Montagno, & Kuzmenko, 2004), these stances are not supported by the literature. On the contrary, even empirical studies which operationalize servant leadership as being primarily weighted toward stakeholder concerns repeatedly find that it is related to organizational growth and performance (e.g. Liden et al., 2014b; Peterson et al., 2012).

It might be argued that such a definition, focused on follower transformation, empowerment, and positive organizational change, has much in common with the dominant approach of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Judge et al., 2006b). Indeed, if the term

were not already in use, one would be tempted to call servant leadership a 'transformational' form of leadership, and it has much in common with Burns' (1978) original concept of the transforming leader. The differences between these approaches have been well-documented in the literature (Bass, 2000; Graham, 1991; Liden et al., 2008; Schaubroeck et al., 2011) and remain relevant when considered alongside the conceptual additions made by this proposed definition. First is the issue of the leader's allegiance: transformational leaders' first obligation, as measured and conceptualized, is to their employing organizations, whereas servant leaders feel strong obligations toward all stakeholders, and especially those whom they have power over (Bass, 2000; Liden et al., 2008; Parolini, Patterson, & Winston, 2009). The transformational leader aligns follower motivations with the needs of the organization (a leadership of 'ends over means'; Nohria & Khurana, 2010), whereas a servant leader models a focus on the needs of many groups (Graham, 1991). There is no ethical basis for transformational leadership as such leaders "vary from the highly idealistic to those without ideals," (Bass, 1985; p. 185) whereas the servant leader acts in accordance with a moral compass and prioritizes ethical development alongside intellectual stimulation (Graham, 1991; Liden et al., 2008). Servant leadership seeks to create meaning in the lives of followers, but if transformational leaders create any meaning, it is simply that "I want this organization to accomplish its goals" (Greenleaf, 1998; Hackman, 2010). Finally, several scholars have claimed that transformational leadership has little theoretical basis holding its component behaviors together beyond their impact on organizational performance (e.g. Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013; Yukl, 1999); servant leadership behaviors, on the other hand, are connected by their root service motivation and their orientation toward creating opportunities to have positive impacts on stakeholders. Servant leadership behaviors such as ethical action, volunteerism promotion, and building sustainably successful institutions that create meaning for followers are all linked by core values aimed at improving organizations, institutions, and communities (Graham, 1991; Greenleaf, 1970; Liden et al., 2008).



Although this definition adds organizational performance components to current scholarly understandings of servant leadership, I do concur with those understandings that it may often be appropriate (although perhaps not *always* appropriate) to view organizational performance as a more distal consequence of servant leadership, mediated by more proximal outcomes of increases in subordinate motivation, characteristics, and well-being (Graham, 1991; Greenleaf, 1977; van Dierendonck, 2011), as those positive subordinate developments are prioritized worthy ends for the servant leader in and of themselves (Greenleaf, 1977; Peterson et al., 2012). This discussion of mechanisms by which servant leadership works to affect outcomes, as well as the boundary conditions that could affect those relationships and what those outcomes might themselves be, are all issues of theory (Daft, 1983) which I examine in the following section.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **A CONTINGENT THEORY OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP'S EFFECTS**

#### **4.1 On theory**

Given the unfortunate view held by some of the leadership field as an area with poorly developed and unintegrated theory (e.g. Avolio et al., 2009; Lombardo & McCall, 1978; Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013), it may be useful to first review what theory is and should be. Popper (1965; p. 59) called theories "nets to catch what we call 'the world': to rationalize, to explain, and to master it." In a more specific sense, a theory can be understood as an empirically testable and systematically related set of logical statements regarding relationships among variables, predicated on certain assumptions (Kohli, 2014; Rudner, 1966). Such theory includes explanation of what constructs are, how they are related, what mechanisms explain those relationships, and what contexts, if any, might be necessary to catalyze or suppress those relationships (Hunt, 2002; Whetten, 1989). Although many have called for academic investigation of specifically ethical and more positive forms of leadership, the literature remains fragmented and normative rather than theoretical and descriptive (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Nohria & Khurana, 2010), especially in the realm of servant leadership (Liden et al., 2014b; van Dierendonck, 2011). Liden and colleagues (2014a) have begun the theorizing process by proposing several predictors and mediators of servant leadership; here, I attempt to build on their work.

#### **4.2 Social exchange as mechanism of leadership**

The academic literature on servant leadership is still young, and although consensus that servant leadership leads to organizationally desirable outcomes is growing (Kiffin-Petersen et al., 2012; Liden et al., 2014b; van Dierendonck, 2011), the mechanisms by which this happens are still not sufficiently understood (Liden et al., 2014a). The servant approach is hardly unique in this as leadership research goes, as many authors have noted the lack of attention to the question

of exactly what leadership is and how it works (Morgeson et al., 2010), calling it a "mysterious process" (Yukl, 2010). As reviewed above, trust in the leader and team climate/culture are two of the most commonly studied mediators of servant leadership (Liden et al., 2014b; Schaubroeck et al., 2011; Walumbwa et al., 2010). Both approaches generally use a social exchange or reciprocity lens (Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960) to argue that followers are inclined to respond in kind to the considerate and developing behavior of a servant leader; some researchers have called these mechanisms "central" to servant leadership processes (Hu & Liden, 2011).

Social exchange is certainly one mechanism by which servant leadership operates, although perhaps not specific to servant leadership: social exchange and reciprocity are frequently cited theoretical mechanisms for the operation of many leadership theories and approaches, such as the vertical dyad model (Dansereau Jr et al., 1975), leader-member exchange (Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997), transformational and transactional (Wang, Law, Hackett, Wang, & Chen, 2005), and the authentic (Walumbwa et al., 2008) and ethical (Brown et al., 2005) leadership models. I would argue, however, that whereas the aspects of social exchange certainly exist within a servant leader-follower relationship, and whereas these should indeed drive some outcomes (especially in the short-term), social exchange is not the primary mechanism by which servant leadership would theoretically be expected to operate. Many approaches to leadership, including most of those listed above, are predicated on assumptions that followers reciprocate positive leader treatment, but servant leadership has from its conception been focused on the idea that servant leaders should create followers who are servant leaders themselves (Greenleaf, 1977) - indeed, this 'transformation' of followers was Greenleaf's ultimate goal and the means by which servant leadership could have a positive impact beyond even the focal organization (Greenleaf, 1998). As Graham (1991; p. 111) noted in her theoretical treatise, "Leader-modeled service (or servant-leadership) is a gift; it also tends to be contagious so that followers of servant-leaders are inspired to pass on the gift." This implies not merely a direct reciprocation, but rather the growth of a spirit of service with beneficiaries beyond the leader and the follower themselves.

### 4.3 Transmission through social learning

I propose, consistent with both the practitioner-oriented and scholarly literatures on the topic, that servant leadership is at its core a process of guiding others to become servant leaders themselves (Greenleaf, 1977; Liden et al., 2014b; Ng et al., 2008). The goal of a servant leader is not to treat followers well in the hopes that they will reciprocate with higher performance (an apt description of contingent reward transactional leadership; see Judge & Piccolo, 2004); rather, a servant leader enhances follower well-being so that those around them may be both more willing and better equipped to serve others, including stakeholders, teammates, and the organization itself (Greenleaf, 1998; van Dierendonck, 2011). Contrary to traditional views on how leaders use status and power (Bass, 1990; Lord & Brown, 2001) and the growth of narcissism in individuals holding high-level positions (Kets de Vries, 1990), servant leaders use these assets to empower and benefit others, rather than themselves. They retain their high status but are unthreatened by raising others to similar status: they are comfortable with the use of power (Greenleaf, 1996a) but are not compelled to use it; rather, they are happy to share it for the purposes of follower development and participative decision-making.

This deviation from more traditional views of how a leader acts and what a leader is (Kets de Vries, 1990; Lord & Brown, 2001), perhaps most explicitly manifested through the servant leader's emphasis on modeling and persuasion rather than coercion and simple exchange (Greenleaf, 1998; Liden et al., 2014b), may act as a particularly powerful catalyst of social learning among followers (Bandura, 1977b). Social learning theory, an extension of the classic interactionist perspective of psychology (Lewin, 1951), suggests in brief that rather than behavior serving as a linear function of personality and environment ( $B = f(P, E)$ ), an individual's behavior, the individual self (including attitudes, cognitions, and personality), and the individual's environment all affect each other bi-directionally. The name "social learning" comes from the subsequent implication that just as individuals often attempt to work their will on their surroundings, an individual's self and behavior are susceptible to change by environmental

influences. Put another way, individuals can learn and find themselves fundamentally altered, naturally, simply by their presence in certain relevant environments or by exposure to new phenomena (a proposition supported by neuroplasticity, or the idea that the brain can be significantly changed after an individual's experiences; Goleman, 2006). This process is cognitively driven, as environmental stimuli spur consideration and reflection within individuals, which in turn can drive changes in the self (changes which may drive behaviors which alter the environment, creating new environmental stimuli, and repeating the process *ad infinitum*). Furthermore, a significant body of research indicates that this form of learning (perhaps more commonly referred to as "learning by example") is relatively both efficient and effective, as compared to more traditional operant forms of instruction and learning (Davis & Luthans, 1980). Exposure to attitudes and behaviors in one's environment can cause changes in the self, according to social learning theory and neuroplasticity. This suggests a question of whether exposure to servant leadership behaviors might prompt individuals to emulate those behaviors and perhaps even the motives and mindsets behind them.

There is a lengthy history of research indicating that when individuals experience behaviors that are unexpected (Pyszczynski & Greenberg, 1981) or other-centric (Berkowitz, 1970; Krebs, 1970), they are especially susceptible to notice, consider, and model those behaviors. This may be particularly true for leader modeling of behaviors considered ethical, such as follower concern, stakeholder development, and humble approaches (Lankau & Scandura, 2002; Mayer et al., 2009; Owens & Hekman, 2012). These behaviors, emerging from figures with status and power acting in ways that *do not activate* the personal advantages of status and power, lead alters to admire these attractive and unexpected actions. This admiration in turn inspires followers to work to become more like the leader (Mayer, Aquino, Greenbaum, & Kuenzi, 2012). Being exposed to unexpected support also likely serves to strengthen follower prosocial values (Grant, Dutton, & Rosso, 2008), and respected leaders - that is, those who couple this support with demonstrated conceptual skills (Ehrhart, 2004; Liden et al., 2008) and organizational

accomplishment (Yukl, 2010) - have disproportionate influence over this process of change (Lord & Brown, 2004). I therefore propose consistent with Greenleaf (1977) and past scholars (Liden et al., 2014b; Russell & Stone, 2002; Walumbwa et al., 2010) that social learning is a key mechanism of servant leadership's impact, based on this logic.

However, as such behavioral modeling is rarely a short-term affair (Bandura, 1977b), it is likely that this particular mechanism for servant leadership's operation only becomes prevalent after the leader and follower have worked together for some time. In a leader and follower's initial interactions, and to some degree throughout their relationship, mechanisms of exchange and trust are likely to explain servant leadership's impact on performance variables (Liden et al., 2008; Schaubroeck et al., 2011; Walumbwa et al., 2010). Those being led develop affective trust and liking for a leader due to the level of genuine concern and support displayed, whereas more cognitive trust develops as they note a servant leader's conceptual skill and orientation toward team and organizational improvement (Colquitt, Piccolo, LePine, Zapata, & Rich, 2012; Schaubroeck et al., 2011). Upward trust is particularly important for the onset of the social learning processes by which servant leadership might be expected to chiefly operate, as it is somewhat rare among managers and subordinates (Chaleff, 2008; Elster, 1983), yet essential for long-term, high quality relationships (Liden et al., 2008). Trust enhances the legitimacy of the servant leader in the minds of her followers, which in turn increases the likelihood that the self will be amenable to alteration following cognitive consideration of the experienced leadership behaviors. These processes can also operate at the group level, as servant leadership creates supportive and psychologically safe environments, promoting trust as group members are free to voice concerns and relationships among group members are developed (Schaubroeck et al., 2011).

Trust is therefore important to open subordinates' minds to the kind of transformation, often dramatic, which servant leaders attempt to model and persuade their followers to take up (Colquitt et al., 2012; Greenleaf, 1977). This is essential to the process of leadership, as it is often unrealistic to intentionally act towards an exclusive goal of impressing a follower with one's

trustworthiness. Rather, trust must develop organically through realization of another's honesty, good-will, and competence (Gambetta, 2000; Mayer et al., 1995), all of which are uniquely prominent in the idea of servant leadership, as demonstrated in multiple empirical studies (Ehrhart, 2004; Schaubroeck et al., 2011; Walumbwa et al., 2010). Additionally, new team members are likely to be initially uncertain about their relationship with the leader (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), and such uncertainty may lead such newcomers to heavily weight initial impressions of fairness in their decisions on whether or not to offer trust (van den Bos & Lind, 2002). Again, such fairness is a key component of servant leadership (van Dierendonck, 2011), providing another mechanism through which initial trust should develop.

Unexpected servant behaviors exhibited early in the relationship between leader and follower are likely viewed initially as idiosyncratic curiosities by followers, which may lead to feelings of initial trust, commitment, and felt obligations to reciprocate. As these behaviors continue, though, and as leader and follower servant behaviors persist with continual social exchange and trust, a climate of service may begin to form in the work group or organization. This is abetted by the kinds of active and passive persuasion that Greenleaf often positioned as central to a servant leader's influence behaviors (Greenleaf, 1998; Yukl, 2010), which he described as working when a follower experiences "a feeling of rightness about a belief or action through one's own intuitive sense," perhaps prompted as a follower notes the unexpected combination of organizational achievement with follower and society improvement orientations (de Luque et al., 2008; Liden et al., 2008; Neubert et al., 2008).

As followers act out servant behaviors, due to senses of reciprocation and trust, a climate for service emerges in the work environment (Hunter et al., 2013; Liden et al., 2014b), in which team members direct their service toward each other, alters outside the focal team and organization, and the organization itself. This shared mental model of service and performance (Hu & Liden, 2011) both contributes to immediate effectiveness and to the gradual internalization

of these goals which is the true purpose of the servant leader (Greenleaf, 1977; Ng et al., 2008).

This dual-outcome phenomena was perhaps best described by Hume:

When each individual perceives the same sense of interest in all his fellows, he immediately performs his part of any contract, as being assured that they will not be wanting in theirs. All of them, by concert enter into a scheme of actions, calculated for common benefit, and agree to be true to their words; nor is there anything requisite to form this concert or connection, but that every one have a sense of interest in the faithful fulfilling of engagements, and express that sense to other members of the society. This immediately causes that interest to operate upon them and interest is the first obligation to the performance of promises. Afterwards, a sentiment of morals concurs with interest, and becomes a new obligation upon mankind." (Hume, 1969; p. 574)

As time progresses, those within the culture begin to internalize these repeated behaviors as they become parts of their identities and self-concepts (Ashforth, 2001). As argued in the social identity theory of leadership (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003), group member self-concept is in part derived from the social groups which are salient in their lives. As individuals spend more time and energy working within such teams and cultures, identification with the group and a desire to be accepted both generally increase, leading to rising conformance to behavior seen as prototypical of the group. Meanwhile, at the dyadic level, a servant leader continues to empower, model, and persuade, as well, creating two functionally similar processes at different levels contributing to follower development (Chen & Kanfer, 2006). In this manner, servant leadership works both actively and passively as a contextual and environmental factor indirectly shaping key aspects of motivation which in turn would be expected to lead to performance outcomes (Hackman, 2010; Hu & Liden, 2011).

Thus, the servant leader works both directly and indirectly, with each approach potentially magnifying the effect of the other, toward the development of followers through social learning (Yukl, 2010). The servant leader recognizes that mere care for serving others will not necessarily be sufficient to create meaningful and positive change; followers must also be possessed of the skills, vision, self-efficacy, and empowerment to proactively create that change, in essence becoming leaders themselves (Podolny et al., 2010; Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004; Walumbwa et al., 2010). Followers must grow in both agentic and communal motivations and



characteristics, desiring to develop their skills and perform at a high level, while using that performance to help the organization and its stakeholders. A high level of communal motivation alone, referred to as unmitigated communion, can lead a follower to avoid developmental opportunities, favor citizenship over required job performance, and engage in unhealthy attitudes (Helgeson, 1994). Agency and communion can coexist and work in concert within individuals, together contributing to desirable outcomes such as prosocial motivations and behaviors (De Dreu, Nijstad, & van Knippenberg, 2008; Van Lange, 1999). Servant leadership itself is a combination of agency (confidently and directly seeking vision and positive change while developing one's own skills) and communion (directing that skill and vision toward positive outcomes for others).

In this manner, the servant leader seeks to create a team of servant leaders (Greenleaf, 1977), an approach that is increasingly relevant in modern atmospheres of work autonomy (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2008) and which servant leaders are quite comfortable with as they are unique in their willingness to share power (Greenleaf, 1996a; Liden et al., 2008; Winston, 2003). Teams characterized by empowered members tend to experience high effectiveness through their multi-pronged approach to problem-solving, low power distance, and subsequent high psychological safety (Bowers & Seashore, 1966; Carson, Tesluk, & Marrone, 2007; Chaleff, 2003). As Yukl stated, "Group effectiveness will depend more on the overall quality of leadership in a work unit than on who actually performs the functions" (Yukl, 2010; p. 59).

I therefore propose that the road from servant leadership to performance outcomes runs through a development of the follower into an individual who him or herself espouses the motivations and resources of the servant leader. I hypothesize two such constructs as mediators of servant leadership in the following hypotheses: prosocial motivation, and positive psychological capital.

## **4.4 Mediators of servant leadership's impact on behavioral outcomes**

### **4.4.1 Motivation**

I first examine a motivational mediator - prosocial motivation - as a likely construct a servant leader would prioritize enhancing in followers, and as a mediator through which servant leadership could affect outcomes. It is important to first distinguish this from the motivation to serve construct, as both are frequently discussed in the literature on servant leadership and may be closely related to each other. Both have seen several distinct conceptual and operational definitions applied to them. Motivation to serve, for instance, has been understood in a military sense as an individual's inclination to join the armed forces (Taubman-Ben-Ari & Findler, 2006), in social work as an indicator of a desire to engage in public service through government work (Mann, 2006), from a vocational perspective as a preference for a career focused on helping others (Duffy & Raque-Bogdan, 2010), and in reference to servant leadership as an antecedent representing a prioritization of subordinates (Ng et al., 2008).

There has been some recent confusion in the literature as to what a prosocial motivation represents as well. Recent management scholarship (e.g. Bowler, Halbesleben, & Paul, 2010; Grant & Sumanth, 2009; Wang & Howell, 2012) has settled on an understanding of prosocial motivation as "the desire to benefit other people" (Grant, 2008), but it has traditionally been understood in a somewhat broader scope in the management and social psychology literatures. This literature has positioned prosocial motivations as encompassing both altruistic and egoistic forces (Batson & Shaw, 1991), and most frequently as representing a "high-high" combination of both motivations to help others and to benefit the self (De Dreu, 2006; De Dreu et al., 2008; Kuhlman & Marshello, 1975; Sattler & Kerr, 1991). This combination of motivations to help the self and others commonly works through such methods as cooperation and striving for outcome equality, rather than service or self-sacrificing behaviors (Van Lange, 1999). Grant, who is credited with the simpler "desire to benefit other people" definition, has recently agreed with this

understanding of the construct, stating that the individual high in prosocial motivation is possessed of a motivation to help oneself as well (Grant & Berry, 2011).

Prosocial motivation may work through both agentic and communal mechanisms (Grant & Gino, 2010), and is distinct from unmitigated communion, a feature of individuals with high motivations to serve others but very little drive to help themselves (Helgeson, 1994). Individuals characterized by unmitigated communion may engage in unhealthy behaviors (Helgeson, 1994), struggle with cooperation, and lack drive for self-development and accomplishment (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007), all of which are inconsistent with the aims of servant leadership behaviors. Rather, a servant leader strives to build agentic motives (for self-development and accomplishment) alongside communal motives (for benefitting others) in followers, consistent with prosocial motivation as described above. Given the overarching drive of the servant leader to more communally help others (Greenleaf, 1970; Liden et al., 2008), it might be logical to assume that other-centric motivations grow relatively more than self-centric motivations. This is both conceptually and operationally represented in the prosocial motivation construct, as its theoretical treatment has emphasized a relatively high level of other-orientation compared to self-orientation (Grant, 2007; Grant, 2008) and its measure, with items such as "It is important to me to have the opportunity to use my abilities to benefit others," is certainly weighted toward other-orientation (Grant & Sumanth, 2009).

Prosocial motivation is distinct from the motivation-to-serve, as it was proposed relevant to servant leadership (Ng et al., 2008), in that the beneficiaries of the motivation-to-serve are limited to a leader's subordinates, whereas a prosocial motivation is a more general positive motivational construct (De Dreu, 2006). Prosocial motivation is also distinct from a more general altruism, which requires both motivations and behaviors (Draguns, 2013), some of which may spring from purely instrumental motives such as helping others in order to gain future favors from them (Batson & Shaw, 1991). This distinction is similar to that established by the motives for organizational citizenship behavior: impression management motives indicate that helping

behaviors are conducted in order to influence others to more positive mindsets regarding the focal individual, whereas prosocial values OCB motives (distinct from prosocial motivation) are held by individuals who simply enjoy helping other people, regardless of (or even in spite of) personal benefits (Rioux & Penner, 2001).

I propose that this prosocial motivation should grow in subordinates as a result of exposure to servant leader behaviors. All forms of motivation can have both traitlike and statelike aspects (Kanfer, Chen, & Pritchard, 2008), but prosocial motivation is most often conceptually defined and discussed specifically as a state, and it has empirically demonstrated a susceptibility to change due to environmental phenomena (e.g. Batson, 1998; Grant, 2007; Grant & Berry, 2011). As reviewed earlier, repeated exposure to behaviors which benefit others, especially when modeled by respected individuals in leadership roles, tends to lead others to consider those behaviors themselves (Berkowitz, 1970; Krebs, 1970). Servant leaders act as highly salient role models for behaviors which benefit others, creating normative expectations for such behavior within the work group and causing subordinates to consider their own prosocial motivations through social learning processes (Bandura, 1997; Greenleaf, 1977; Russell & Stone, 2002; Walumbwa et al., 2010). Additionally, considering and engaging in behaviors which benefit others generates positive affect and feelings of well-being, especially in those for whom such behaviors would normally be novel (Batson & Shaw, 1991; Buchanan & Bardi, 2010). This can happen through a variety of channels: as individuals realize their own relative good standing, as they foster a more positive perception of others, as they begin to view themselves as good and generous people, and as this helping leads them to foster deeper and more positive relationships with others (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005; Trivers, 1971). This positive affect, in turn, builds the attractiveness of other-centric actions, and acts as feedback which individuals consider as they adjust and align their goals and orientations with their desired outcomes (Bolino, Harvey, & Bachrach, 2012; Gollwitzer, 1990). Such activities may also build self-esteem and self-worth, which individuals are motivated to maintain (Shamir et al., 1993). Through these mechanisms and

those reviewed previously, servant leaders promote prosocial motives in their followers, building the idea of service into their identities.

Such a motivation to behave prosocially has been suggested as a likely outcome of servant leadership by other scholars (Liden et al., 2014a; Ng et al., 2008), but has not yet been empirically tested. One possible antecedent of prosocial motivation is gratitude, however (Grant & Gino, 2010), which many followers of servant leaders should feel after receiving helpful behaviors. Servant leadership, with its strong focus on teamwork and participation (Greenleaf, 1998; Reinke, 2003; van Dierendonck, 2011), creates perceptions of interdependence and team salience, which has also been linked to growing other-centric motivations (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Specific to the work setting, perceptions of favorable leader behavior grow commitment to and concern for the leader and organization, which build motives to help others in the work context (Rioux & Penner, 2001). For these reasons, I believe that exposure to servant leadership should be associated with higher prosocial motivation in those being led.

*Hypothesis 1: Supervisor servant leadership is positively related to subordinate prosocial motivation.*

#### **4.4.2 Resources**

This first hypothesis speaks to relationships of servant leadership with followers' inclinations; the literature also suggests an effect on agentic subordinate resource availability through the concept of positive psychological capital (PsyCap). Whereas traditional forms of capital such as social or human capital focus on who individuals know and what they have, psychological capital represents what an individual feels he or she "can become" (Avolio & Luthans, 2006). There are four factors within the overall construct of positive psychological capital: generalized self-efficacy, representing confidence in one's own general ability to do things well (Bandura, 1977a); optimism, a broad concept representing a tendency to think positively and manage difficult events with minimal distress (Scheier & Carver, 1992); hope, or a tendency to interpret the environment as favorable to one's goals (Snyder, 1994); and resilience,

an individual difference representing ability to overcome, manage, and/or bounce back from adverse conditions (Block & Kremen, 1996). These four characteristics were chosen by their matches with the criteria for positive organizational behavior constructs, in that they are well-grounded in theory and measurement, unique to the OB field, susceptible to development and within-person change, and positively related to job performance and satisfaction (Luthans et al., 2007a; Luthans et al., 2007b). The four dimensions of PsyCap are both conceptually and empirically distinct (Luthans et al., 2007b; Youssef & Luthans, 2007) and load to the higher-order PsyCap variable which predicts outcomes such as individual performance and satisfaction (Luthans et al., 2007a). This construct is theorized to affect attitudinal and behavioral outcomes through an approach/avoidance framework, such that individuals high in PsyCap are more sensitive to positive information, "approaching" new and uncertain opportunities while not being unduly affected by negative information (Avey, Luthans, & Youssef, 2010; Clapp-Smith, Luthans, & Avolio, 2007; Luthans, Avey, Avolio, Norman, & Combs, 2006).

Greenleaf stated that the truest mark of servant leaders was that their subordinates would become "wiser" and "freer" (Greenleaf, 1977), words which he understood as involving reaching out to opportunities, being inspired by and creating hope, and seeking to become an active part of the world in order to make it better (Greenleaf, 1996a, 1998). This explicit promotion-focus and belief that one is capable of creating meaningful change is quite consistent with the mindset prevalent in the high-PsyCap individual (Luthans et al., 2007b; Van den Heuvel, Demerouti, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2010), and also consistent with academic definitions of wisdom which describe it as openness, humor, comfort with uncertainty, and emotional stability (Bangen, Meeks, & Jeste, 2013). Unlike the transformational leadership approach, servant leadership's development of subordinates is not limited to work-relevant skills (Graham, 1991; Stephens et al., 1995), additionally focusing on building subordinate character, authenticity, and emotional well-being (Liden et al., 2008; van Dierendonck, 2011). Self-efficacy, optimism, and resilience can grow as a result of leader development, empowerment, and involvement in decision-making

(Chen & Bliese, 2002; De Hoogh & Den Hartog, 2008; Harland, Harrison, Jones, & Reiter-Palmon, 2005), and hope has been theorized as a likely outcome of exposure to servant leadership (Searle & Barbuto, 2011).

Social learning can contribute to the development of psychological capital through several mechanisms related to servant leadership. For instance, individuals exposed to servant leadership grow from their development, realizing a boost in their skills and thus enhancing components of PsyCap such as self-efficacy (Walumbwa et al., 2010), while they receive praise and developmental feedback for accomplishments, which can also enhance all four PsyCap components (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990). Similarly, respectful treatment by a servant leader can build the ego of followers to healthy and non-narcissistic levels (Liden et al., 2014a), which in turn could boost psychological capital. Another mechanism through which servant leadership may build PsyCap is the fulfillment of basic needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Servant leaders fulfill all three of these needs for subordinates by, respectively, empowering and encouraging participative decision-making, developing skills and role-modeling conceptual competence, and prioritizing follower needs and well-being through long-term relationships (Greenleaf, 1977; Liden et al., 2014a; Liden et al., 2008; Schaubroeck et al., 2011; van Dierendonck, 2011). This in turn enhances well-being, self-efficacy, and resilience, key components of positive psychological capital (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Although traits such as the ones that compose PsyCap are sometimes thought to be relatively enduring, extant empirical research aligns with this theory in providing support for their more statelike nature (Luthans et al., 2007a) and servant leadership's impact. Core self-evaluation, instead, is viewed as the more traitlike version of the characteristics inherent within psychological capital (Judge & Bono, 2001). Both theory and empirics of hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience have demonstrated their status as relatively state-like (Bandura, 1997; Peterson, 2000; Snyder et al., 1996; Tugade, Fredrickson, & Feldman Barrett, 2004), indicating that while they do not change momentarily, they can alter or be developed over time (Luthans et al., 2007a).

Leadership behaviors based around development and empowerment have been shown to boost both follower self-efficacy (Chen & Bliese, 2002) and related self-esteem (Podsakoff et al., 1990) by building subordinate skills and providing chances to experience success, and servant leadership in particular has been statistically linked to increments in follower self-efficacy (Walumbwa et al., 2010). In alignment with the final theoretical argument presented, servant leadership has been shown to fulfill basic subordinate needs (Mayer et al., 2008), which in turn boost internal locus of control (Rotter, 1966; Vlachopoulos & Michailidou, 2006), providing hope and optimism, and lower negative affect, which is closely related to resilience and optimism (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Servant leaders also build confidence in their followers, which may positively impact several components of PsyCap (Liden et al., 2014a). I therefore hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 2: Supervisor servant leadership is positively related to subordinate positive psychological capital.*

## **4.5 Behavioral outcomes of servant leadership**

### **4.5.1 Employee voice behaviors**

This development of those led by servant leaders in prosocial motivation and positive psychological capital should in turn impact several outcomes salient to both the organization and the individuals themselves. The first of these is employee voice, which has been described as promotive behaviors which constructively challenge existing processes with the goal of improving them, and prohibitive behaviors which highlight inefficient or ineffective processes with the goal of ending them (Liang, Farh, & J-L., 2012; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Employee voice is a form of organizational citizenship behavior (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006) in that it is meant to improve the context of the team or organization's operations, but is seldom an explicit job role requirement (Morrison, 1994). The provision of voice can be a risky proposition for organization members, as it is generally directed at those in power (because they are the ones most likely to be able to enact suggested changes), but may also be seen as threatening to them as it is frequently critical of current processes and/or management (Detert & Burris, 2007).



Employee voice behaviors are nonetheless desirable in most organizations, as they are conducive to improvement processes, performance, and innovation, as well as employee satisfaction and retention (Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014; Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Spencer, 1986; Van Dyne, Cummings, & McLean Parks, 1995; Whiting, Podsakoff, & Pierce, 2008).

Voice behaviors are theorized as being driven primarily by motivational forces to either improve the operations of the team or organization, or to simply enact positive change in those bodies (Morrison, 2011). Such a perceived obligation to enact positive change is an important antecedent to both promotive and prohibitive voice (Liang et al., 2012). This implies an underlying motive to improve an individual's surroundings and help others, as represented by a prosocial motivation. Whereas prosocial motivation is certainly not the only motivational force which might drive employee voice (organizational commitment and satisfaction, for instance, can on their own drive voice; Burriss, Detert, & Chiaburu, 2008), this construct regardless motivates individuals to take actions which help others around them. Such motives often inspire citizenship behaviors such as voice (Rioux & Penner, 2001) and can drive persistence around those behaviors to continue them even in the face of resistance or adversity (Grant & Ashford, 2008). Although prosocial motivation might best be considered as more generally motivating overall behaviors such as volunteerism, research has indicated that such forces work similarly to motivate OCBs (Finkelstein & Penner, 2004). Feelings of motive fulfillment following such behaviors strengthen the motive and lead in turn to further citizenship behaviors such as voice (Bolino et al., 2012; Lemoine, Parsons, & Kansara, 2015). Individuals with strong prosocial motivations are more willing to risk any backlash from taking a potentially controversial stance in order to improve processes for the good of their teams (Moon, Kamdar, Mayer, & Takeuchi, 2008).

Individuals with relatively high prosocial motivations are driven to voice concerns about improvements to team and organizational processes by their desire to help both their teammates and the overall collective (Grant & Mayer, 2009). However, as a prosocial motivation represents both self-centric and other-centric motivations (De Dreu, 2006; Grant & Berry, 2011), it might be

expected to inspire employee voice only so far as that voice is not seen by the focal individual as potentially detrimental to themselves. Challenging the status quo, especially to a traditional directive and ego-involved manager, can be a troublesome proposition with the potential of significant repercussions for the voice-provider (Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton, 1998). Self-centric motives toward impression management concerns, which might be coupled with prosocial motivations (De Dreu, 2006), can hinder challenging voice behaviors (Grant & Mayer, 2009). This suggests that prosocial motivation might have a relatively weak relationship with voice, an idea supported by a recent field study (Grant & Mayer, 2009).

However, the context of servant leadership likely makes a mediated relationship through prosocial motivation to voice stronger due to a reduced perception of risk. Servant leaders are seekers of knowledge (Greenleaf, 1998) who are interested first and foremost in finding better ways to improve the conditions of organizational stakeholders (Ehrhart, 2004; Greenleaf, 1977). Servant leadership behaviors are not enacted by individuals with sensitive and fragile egos (Peterson et al., 2012) or those who are inclined toward protecting their bases of power (Greenleaf, 1977; van Dierendonck, 2011). Servant leaders also maintain strong personal relationships with their employees (Liden et al., 2008) and practice a form of relational power such that they view absorbing useful influence from another as a mark of strength (Graham, 1991; Loomer, 1976). Altogether, these factors suggest an open environment marked by psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999) in which team members feel safe and free in sharing potentially controversial ideas with both their supervisors and their peers. When leaders create such environments, research has demonstrated that they are especially likely to spark voice (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009), removing the potential image barriers that would might prevent those characterized by prosocial motivation (Morrison, 2011).

Additionally, part of Greenleaf's theory-in-use regarding the transformation of servant followers speaks to how such individuals are guided by their prosocial motivations to question authority, such that they will only follow leaders and plans which are consistent with that overall

goal of serving others (Greenleaf, 1977). This aligns with recent research on follower-centric approaches to leadership (Kelley, 1988; Uhl-Bien et al., 2013) which place follower voice and, when necessary, conscientious objection, as characteristics of the most effective leader-follower relationships (Chaleff, 2008). The development of a follower into a servant results in that follower becoming a "check" on the servant leader, such that they feel empowered to point out any excesses or deviation from effective practices (Graham, 1991; Liden et al., 2008); their prosocial motivation requires them to act in the perceived best interests of the team and organization, especially as servant leaders build consensus of commitment to the organization's vision, which followers see as driven by a higher purpose (Greenleaf, 1970; van Dierendonck, 2011).

*Hypothesis 3a: Subordinates with stronger prosocial motivations are more likely to engage in employee voice behaviors (than those with lower prosocial motivations).*

The combination of Hypotheses 1 and 3a suggest a mediation effect of servant leadership on employee voice behavior through prosocial motivation. It is unlikely that prosocial motivation fully mediates this relationship, however, as servant leadership may be related to employee voice both through the other mediator provided in this paper, and through other mechanisms not central to this research. For instance, servant leaders may spark voice by creating trust in subordinates that their critiques will be taken constructively as intended, rather than as threats to existing power bases (Ashford et al., 1998; Liden et al., 2008; Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Schaubroeck et al., 2011). Additionally, voice may arise from a servant leader's orientation toward meaningful positive change, as such leaders encourage listening, participative decision-making, and empower employees toward accomplishing their mutual vision (Detert & Burris, 2007; Greenleaf, 1998). Servant leaders are seekers of knowledge (Greenleaf, 1998) who are interested first and foremost in finding better ways to improve the conditions of organizational stakeholders (Ehrhart, 2004; Greenleaf, 1977). Servant leadership behaviors are not enacted by individuals with sensitive and fragile egos (Peterson et al., 2012) or those who are bent toward protecting their bases of power

(Greenleaf, 1977; van Dierendonck, 2011). Servant leaders also maintain strong personal relationships with their employees (Liden et al., 2008) and practice a form of relational power such that they view absorbing useful influence from another as a mark of strength (Graham, 1991; Loomer, 1976). Altogether, these factors suggest an open environment marked by psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999) in which team members feel safe and free in sharing potentially controversial ideas with both their supervisors and their peers. When leaders create such environments, research has demonstrated that they are especially likely to spark voice behaviors in their employees (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009), removing the potential image barriers that would normally prevent those characterized by prosocial motivation (Morrison, 2011). Psychological safety is important for the initiation of both promotive and prohibitive voice (Liang et al., 2012). This suggests that:

*Hypothesis 3b: The positive relationship between supervisor servant leadership and employee voice behaviors is mediated by subordinate prosocial motivation.*

Three clear prerequisites of employee voice behavior suggested by the literature are the confidence that one has competently generated an idea capable of producing meaningful improvement, the belief that one can make a positive difference by sharing this idea with those in power, and the perceived likelihood that others will react positively, rather than negatively, to this voice (Morrison, 2011). All three of these prerequisites speak to implications of the second servant-leader-developed characteristic of subordinates, positive psychological capital. First, an individual with low PsyCap is less likely to believe that he has come up with a meaningful suggestion for improvement, as low optimism and self-efficacy lead him to place little value on himself and his ideas, his lack of hope suggests to him that there is little he can do to influence the world around him, and his low resilience makes him easily embarrassed, anxious, and unlikely to consider the positive implications of sharing ideas (Judge, Locke, & Durham, 1997; LePine & Van Dyne, 2001). Individuals low in PsyCap also lack the hope and optimism necessary to present controversial ideas to superiors, and the self-efficacy that would give them

belief that they would present the ideas effectively. Individuals low in PsyCap might also expect the worst outcome from approaching managers with critical voice, based on their low hope and optimism (Withey & Cooper, 1989). Finally, individuals with low PsyCap are likely to believe that they are unable to employ the self-presentation skills necessary to most effectively communicate their idea (Baumeister, 1982; Trapnell & Campbell, 1999).

As both are relatively new constructs, I was unable to find any empirical studies specifically linking PsyCap with voice behavior. PsyCap has been linked to both general organizational citizenship behaviors (of which voice is one example) and job engagement (Avey et al., 2010), the latter being closely related to the willingness to voice concerns for organizational improvement (Burris et al., 2008; Kahn, 1990). The related construct of core self-evaluations (a highly similar but more traitlike construct composed of self-efficacy, self-esteem, emotional stability, and internal locus of control; Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2003), proposed as a more stable and dispositional representation of the positive self-image represented by psychological capital (Luthans et al., 2007a), has been related to voice behaviors in a sample of several hundred members of the Swiss armed forces (Kamer & Annen, 2010). More generally, core self-evaluations have also been meta-analytically confirmed to predict outcomes related to voice, such as organizational citizenship behaviors, motivation, and goal commitment (Chang, Ferris, Johnson, Rosen, & Tan, 2012). Two of the components of positive psychological capital, when studied individually, have also been specifically linked to employee voice behaviors: self-efficacy (Parker, 1993), and optimism (Withey & Cooper, 1989). I therefore propose:

*Hypothesis 4a: Subordinates with high positive psychological capital (PsyCap) are more likely to engage in employee voice behaviors (than those with low PsyCap).*

*Hypothesis 4b: The positive relationship between supervisor servant leadership and employee voice behaviors is mediated by subordinate positive psychological capital.*

#### **4.5.2 In-role performance**

Regardless of the benefits to society, followers, and other stakeholders, the most compelling reason for many organizations to adopt and promote servant leadership models would

be an effect on performance (Giampetro-Meyer et al., 1998). Indeed, as reviewed above, the assumption of a performance-orientation is one of the most central and consistent elements of theory on leadership behaviors, although not one that has traditionally been emphasized as part of the servant leadership construct (DeRue, Nahrgang, Wellman, & Humphrey, 2011; Podolny et al., 2010; Schaubroeck et al., 2011). The result of the exclusively person-focused approach of many servant leadership models has inspired some question as to whether servant leadership is truly a useful, desirable paradigm for use in modern organizations (Andersen, 2009). There are at least two appropriate responses to this query: first, that servant leadership has always had an explicit orientation toward driving organizational results, ever since the original writings on the topic (Greenleaf, 1970, 1996a, 1998); and second, that leadership may most effectively drive results *through* more person-oriented mechanisms such as follower development and the creation of individual and organizational meaning (Fayol, 1949; Hackman, 2010; Selznick, 1957). I concur with Petersen and colleagues (2012; p. 575) in suggesting that "servant leadership may contain overlooked critical aspects of leadership important to firm performance."

The idea that promoting prosocial motivations might drive performance has theoretical roots in the work of Herbert Simon (1990), who built on bounded rationality theory (March & Simon, 1958) to propose that while all individual decisions are made through the processing of socially gathered information, some people are better suited to effectively and completely process that information than others. Specifically, he wrote, individuals who are relatively high in self-concern (relative to those primarily concerned for others) would disregard certain information (and therefore not process it for use in decision-making) due to associated personal costs, such as information suggesting that the way they previously behaved was inappropriate, or that a process instigated and promoted by such individuals was in fact incorrect. Individuals whose motives and values are more concerned with others, however, would either not view such information as ego-threatening, or would fully consider it regardless of ego costs to self. Therefore, such individuals would have less biased information processing and greater access to information, providing more

resources to make appropriate and effective decisions. Better decision-making processes should, in turn, improve in-role performance.

This idea was expanded in the theory of rational self-interest (Meglino & Korsgaard, 2004), which suggests that individuals motivated more toward others than toward themselves should have greater in-role task performance than those driven chiefly by concerns for self. Meglino and Korsgaard put forth several arguments supporting this overall proposition. First, individuals oriented toward others are more willing to accept and act on negative feedback (Ashford & Cummings, 1983), as they would find it less personally threatening and instead more useful for increasing the benefits they could offer to relevant others (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). Second, such individuals may take more rational actions while engaged in failing organizational initiatives: rather than escalating commitment to a failing plan in order to save face, they are more likely to disregard ego concerns and take rational steps to improve performance. They will hold more realistic views of their selves and their capabilities, indicating more effective and efficient processes of working through tasks. Finally, as they are not primarily driven by self-interest, their performance and motivation is less dependent upon mood and attitudes such as job satisfaction; instead, they are more consistently driven by doing a good job to benefit others.

Empirical evidence is accumulating for these theories. A series of experiments designed to specifically test Simon's (1990) propositions found that self-interested individuals both experienced more limited information processing than those higher in other-concern, and were less likely to take steps to improve after receiving negative feedback (Korsgaard, Meglino, & Lester, 1997). Concern primarily for the self has also been empirically linked with task failure through inappropriate escalation of commitment to those tasks (Zhang & Baumeister, 2006), and the feedback-seeking literature has consistently demonstrated how ego concerns can lead to distortion or discounting of potentially threatening feedback (Morrison & Cummings, 1992; Mussweiler, Gabriel, & Bodenhausen, 2000). Individuals whose motivations are geared toward the self tend to have unrealistic assessments of their own abilities (Campbell, Rudich, &

Sedikides, 2002; Paulhus, Harms, Bruce, & Lysy, 2003), which in turn hurts their task performance (Judge, LePine, & Rich, 2006a; Vancouver & Kendall, 2006). Thus, motivations oriented toward the self alone often create self-protecting cognitions and behaviors, which in turn serve to limit the efficacy of such individuals for task performance.

This theory suggests the proposal that individuals relatively high in prosocial motivation will hold performance advantages over their peers who are less driven by others and cooperation.

*Hypothesis 5a: Subordinates with stronger prosocial motivations will exhibit higher levels of in-role performance (than those with weaker prosocial motivations).*

The relationship between positive psychological capital and performance, on the other hand, is relatively more straightforward. The four components of PsyCap - self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience - are all psychological strengths initially selected to be part of the overall construct in part because of their positive effects on work-related performance (Luthans, 2002; Luthans et al., 2007a). As a composite construct, PsyCap has meta-analytically demonstrated positive relationships with a variety of measures of subjective and objective in-role performance (Avey, Reichard, Luthans, & Mhatre, 2011b), providing incremental predictive power over testing its components alone (Luthans et al., 2007a). Many arguments have been used for these effects, including general impacts of associated positive affect, increased productive behaviors through enhanced expectancy beliefs, and a conservation of resources approach (Hobfoll, 1988) in which high PsyCap individuals perceive themselves as having more resources to devote to work, enhancing their effort (Avey et al., 2011b; Luthans et al., 2007a). Avey and colleagues (2010) suggested that many of these effects may fall under an approach/avoidance theoretical hierarchy (Elliot & Thrash, 2002). They argued that psychological capital's effects on organizational outcomes are generally driven by increased approach mentalities coupled with reduced avoidance mentalities, with approachers finding new opportunities and working harder, and avoiders failing to pursue opportunities for growth and improvement. I therefore hypothesize,



consistent with this extant body of findings, that subordinate PsyCap will be related to subordinate in-role performance.

*Hypothesis 6a: Subordinates with higher positive psychological capital (PsyCap) will exhibit higher levels of in-role performance (than those with lower PsyCap).*

These arguments suggest relationships between servant leadership and in-role performance mediated by prosocial motivation and positive psychological capital, but there is evidence that a direct path might also exist. Although current operational models of servant leadership somewhat limit its behaviors to those focused on subordinate and community development (Ehrhart, 2004; Liden et al., 2008), the definition proposed here adds explicit leader foci on both immediate and future organizational task performance, consistent with current overall models of leadership behavior (Yukl et al., 2002) as well as servant leadership's original conceptualization (Greenleaf, 1977, 1996a). Decades of empirical evidence demonstrate how task- and change-oriented leader behaviors, such as clarifying task objectives, encouraging innovative thinking to solve problems, and proposing and building buy-in for bold new visions, impact subordinate performance (Fleishman, 1953a; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Yukl, 1989, 2010). While the transformative aspects of servant leadership are expected to drive in-role performance, more traditional performance-oriented leadership behaviors should also have an incremental impact on task effectiveness. These effects would likely emerge more quickly than the effects through the mediators proposed here, as such employee development requires more time than impacts on performance from simply coordinating activities efficiently, leading creative brainstorming, or challenging subordinates to increase their outputs.

Additionally, studies of servant leadership, with operationalizations weighted toward subordinate and community development, find repeated support for its impact on various operationalizations of in-role performance through mechanisms of social exchange, trust, commitment, and the creation of serving climates and associated shared mental models (Hu & Liden, 2011; Liden et al., 2014b; Liden et al., 2008; Schaubroeck et al., 2011; Walumbwa et al.,

2010). This demonstrates that in addition to the more long-term impacts on subordinates' characteristics, values, and motivations proposed in this research, servant leaders' foci on followers and stakeholders also affect performance through these additional mechanisms.

*Hypothesis 5b: The positive relationship between supervisor servant leadership and subordinate in-role performance is mediated by subordinate prosocial motivation.*

*Hypothesis 6b: The positive relationship between supervisor servant leadership and subordinate in-role performance is mediated by subordinate positive psychological capital.*

#### **4.5.3 Subordinate servant leadership behaviors**

A final proposed outcome of this research, and perhaps the most crucial to classic understandings of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970), is the enactment of servant leadership behaviors by the followers of servant leaders. Indeed, although it has never been tested in academic research, such contagion of followers into servant leaders is seen as one of the most crucial outcomes of servant leadership (if not *the* most crucial) by scholars, practitioners, and the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership itself (Falotico, 2014; Greenleaf, 1996a; Liden et al., 2014a). Such an outcome, with followers themselves growing to act as leaders to others around them, is consistent with original conceptualizations of servant leadership which insisted that influence between leaders and followers would not be unidirectional (Greenleaf, 1998), similar assertions of mutual influence from related academic conceptualizations of leadership (Burns, 1978), and the relatively recent scholarly focus on followers as co-producers of the leadership process (Uhl-Bien et al., 2013). As followers increasingly become more autonomous and empowered (Day, Gronn, & Salas, 2004; Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012), organizational decision-making becomes more participative, and power distance between leaders and followers decreases (Fernandez, Carlson, Stepina, & Nicholson, 1997; House, 2004; Seibert, Wang, & Courtright, 2011), the importance of theoretical models of leadership which allow for leadership activities by those not in formal leadership roles has never been greater (DeRue, 2011; Uhl-Bien et al., 2013).

The main theme of the emerging literature on "balanced" (Shamir, 2007) or "follower-centric" (Uhl-Bien et al., 2013) approaches to leadership is that it is unrealistic to consider a

leader's subordinates to be wholly passive blank slates, accepting influence from others but offering none of their own. Such a state is neither plausible nor desirable. On the former, a great deal of research indicates that subordinates are neither universally likely to accept influence (Erez & Earley, 1993; Rost, 2008) nor particularly driven to avoid utilizing influence behaviors on their own superiors and colleagues (Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera, & McGregor, 2010; Kelley, 1988). On the contrary, differences in characteristics and perceived roles can attenuate the effectiveness of leadership (Carsten et al., 2010; DeRue & Ashford, 2010), and can also drive followers to engage in influence of their own, aimed at those around them (Kelley, 1988; Uhl-Bien et al., 2013). Maroosis (2008) suggested, relevant to this theory of servant leadership, that a chief component of followership is mimetic in that followers grow to think more like the leader in the way that they are primed to respond to situations. Leaders teach followers to think for themselves, but in new ways, and this implies that the follower would recognize and possibly "speak up" if that leader later deviates from the established path (Kelley, 1988) or if they saw others in need of leadership. Although only recently explicitly examined in academic studies of management, such a perspective is wholly consistent with some of our earliest scholarship on leadership (Follett, 1973) and established theories of leader-member exchange (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Many scholars have written that this follower-to-leader transition is not only realistic, but also desirable based on their capacity to keep leaders and teams 'in check' (Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2013; Chaleff, 2008; Kelley, 1988). Adaptive leadership theory (DeRue, 2011) similarly suggests that leadership in the modern context is frequently seen not as a title but as a role, and that role may be claimed or granted by any regardless of hierarchy. As power distance in organizations shrinks and individual organization members feel increasingly comfortable asserting their own authority (Uhl-Bien et al., 2013) and as organization members become just as likely to look to peers for leadership as they are to managers (DeRue & Ashford, 2010), the role and possibility of leaders developing leaders becomes both realistic and important. Although such leader influence

by those in hierarchical follower roles may be lateral or downward (Yukl & Tracey, 1992), upward influence may be the most organizationally useful. Lord Acton's classic acknowledgement that power corrupts has been supported by findings in the management literature of links between power attainment (often through positions of organizational leadership) and questionably ethical outcomes (e.g. Lammers, Stapel, & Galinsky, 2010; Wiltermuth & Flynn, 2013). This phenomena has been blamed for many of the corporate scandals of the early twentieth century (Nohria & Khurana, 2010). Although the traditional view of a leader's subordinates is passive and deferent (Zaleznik, 1977) and history is replete with examples of injustices committed by nations and organizations due in part to the complicit and passive nature of followers in failing to stand up to their leaders (Chaleff, 2003), the changing context of leadership in organizations creates the conditions necessary for followers to exert considerable positive upward influence (Uhl-Bien et al., 2013).

This topic is particularly relevant for discussions of servant leadership as it was foreshadowed by Greenleaf in his original writings on the topic: "Discriminating and determined servants as followers are as important as servant-leaders, and everyone, from time to time, may be in both roles" (Greenleaf, 1977; p. 18). Consistent with modern theories of shared and complexity leadership (Carson et al., 2007; Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2008), he proposed servant leadership as a system in which servant-leaders would be created from subordinates, and ultimately be equipped to take charge themselves. Graham wrote extensively on servant leadership's unique focus on follower moral development in conjunction with empowerment, and how together they equip followers with active critical thinking critical to preventing manager excesses (Graham, 1982, 1988, 1991). These emphases on follower ethical development and empowerment have remained prevalent in modern models of servant leadership (Liden et al., 2008; van Dierendonck, 2011), suggesting both the development of conscientious voice discussed earlier in this paper, and a willingness of servant-leaders to allow themselves to be influenced by their followers (Graham, 1991). Similarly, as a servant climate grows within organizations and teams (Liden et al., 2014b),

individuals who have become more like the servant leader and the climate through social learning are prototypical of the team itself, promoting their emergence as leaders (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). This could lead in time to the emergence of full high densities and low centralities of shared leadership within teams led by servant leaders (Carson et al., 2007; Mayo, Meindl, & Pastor, 2003), which those hierarchical leaders themselves would continue to develop and nourish.

Just as servant leadership behaviors model other-centric values for subordinates, then, those subordinates themselves might model the same values and behaviors for their leaders, peers, and their own subordinates in a reciprocal pattern, reinforcing the original behaviors. This kind of reciprocal influence playing out in leader-follower relationships is an established mechanism by which leader attitudes, behaviors, and cognitions can be altered by followers (Guest, 1987; Offermann, 2004). Social learning processes are not limited to hierarchical status, but rather take effect when individuals learn from respected, competent others (Bandura, 1977b), and servant leaders are themselves marked by their respect for and perception of value in their followers (Greenleaf, 1977; van Dierendonck, 2011), suggesting an openness to shared leadership within servant-led teams. Individuals with strong motives and abilities directed toward others are motivated to act, and they should move to reinforce and promote servant leadership behaviors in their managers, peers, and subordinates.

Greenleaf's (1970) original idea that servant leaders would create servant leaders in those around them is therefore consistent with established models of "upward spirals" of leadership based on influence reciprocity (Lord & Brown, 2001; Oc & Bashshur, 2013; Yukl, 2010), adaptive leadership frameworks of emerging non-hierarchical leadership (DeRue, 2011), and Burns' (1978) assertion that leadership most effectively manifests as leaders and subordinates "raising one another to higher levels of morality and motivation." I therefore predict that followers may themselves come to engage in servant leadership behaviors through these mechanisms. Servant follower prosocial motivation drives prosocial behaviors in the workplace, and those behaviors are expected to manifest frequently in the culture built by the servant leader,

creating norms for these types of behaviors among organization members (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003). Additionally, these motives create behaviors which may inspire individuals, and which they may absorb into value systems through social learning, and also reinforce other-centric values as a core part of the group's identity, just as Greenleaf originally proposed. This indicates internalization of the values by the group's members, including the leader (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), and the possibility for influence interventions by concerned members if the leader is not viewed as behaving in accordance with the group's rising moral standard (Graham, 1991). Since one of the bases of servant leadership is high-quality relationships marked by mutual respect, honesty, and trust (Greenleaf, 1977; Liden et al., 2008; Schaubroeck et al., 2011), followers are likely to offer and receive such lateral and upward influence, and servant leaders are themselves also likely to receive it. In this manner, leaders who previously engaged in servant behaviors but subsequently stopped may be influenced to resume them, and organization members not directly interacting with hierarchical servant leaders may experience servant leadership through multiple sources.

For these reasons, I theorize in agreement with both scholars of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977; Russell & Stone, 2002) and general leadership (Burns, 1978; Yukl, 2010) that servant leadership behaviors will be somewhat contagious, with followers enacting these behaviors themselves in accordance with their high prosocial motivation.

*Hypothesis 7a: Subordinates with stronger prosocial motivation will be more likely to exhibit servant leadership behaviors themselves (compared to subordinates with weaker prosocial motivation).*

The combination of this hypotheses with the main effect propositions suggests that subordinate prosocial motivation mediates a positive relationship of manager servant leadership behavior affecting later subordinate servant leadership behaviors. There are a variety of mechanisms through which employees may emulate their managers' particular styles of leader behaviors, such as changing culture and group prototypicality (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003), direct leader development (Liden et al., 2008), and even impression management, such that

individuals hope to improve their standing with a manager by acting more like that manager (Bolino, 1999). Individuals may engage in servant leadership behaviors not due to their own preferences and values, but because of organizational norms or prescribed training programs instituted in the wake of the concept's popularity (van Dierendonck, 2011). It is even feasible that some individuals might enact servant leadership behaviors skeptically, or even grudgingly, without a commitment to maintain them, as a result of normative pressures or organizational requirements. Some have proposed that one does not need to be authentically positive to engage in positive leadership behaviors, especially in the short-term (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Although many servant leadership behaviors may be motivated by strong leader service values (Greenleaf, 1977; Liden et al., 2014a), it is likely that some managers and employees are motivated to engage in them through normative factors.

Therefore, servant leadership may spread from a manager to others in an organization by multiple means - some positive and some less so - but prosocial motivation should be a salient and long-lasting mechanism of its contagion.

*Hypothesis 7b: The positive relationship between supervisor servant leadership behaviors and subordinate servant leadership behaviors is mediated by subordinate prosocial motivation.*

The second mediator of servant leadership presented here, subordinate psychological capital, may also impact servant leader behaviors in others, as an individual's self-assured nature can enable individuals to reach out to others more often and more effectively, and take a more active and prosocial role in organizations (Luthans, 2002). Given an opportunity to claim a leadership role (DeRue & Ashford, 2010) and act to help coworkers and/or the organization, individuals may choose to address the situation with approach or avoidance methods (Elliot & Thrash, 2002). The individual high in PsyCap is more likely to 'approach' such situations by expressing concerns, developing and helping others, reinforcing values, modeling appropriate behavior, and/or forming coalitions to solve problems (Avey et al., 2010; Luthans et al., 2006). Subordinates relatively low in PsyCap, on the other hand, may be disturbed if they perceive value

and behavior incongruity between others and themselves, but are more likely to 'avoid' the situation by ignoring these opportunities and rethinking their own motivations and behaviors instead (Cable & Parsons, 2001). Psychological resources and confidence are thus necessary conditions for individuals to enact leader roles themselves, often in the absence of a formal leadership title, as such individuals must fundamentally believe that they are capable of creating positive change, impacting others, avoiding harmful consequences of failed influence (Yukl & Tracey, 1992), and in general being granted leadership roles by others (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Approaching others with the kind of positive direction and motive inherent in servant leader behaviors requires one to be optimistic and hopeful for a positive result, resilient in the possible expectation of a negative result, and confident in one's own ability to successfully influence (self-efficacy). This hypothesis is supported by literature demonstrating relationships between psychological capital and confidence, commitment to improve the organization, and lower stress and turnover, the latter perhaps indicating a willingness to work through problems in a leader role rather than avoid them (Avey, Luthans, & Jensen, 2009; Avey et al., 2010; Luthans et al., 2007a). Research directly linking positive psychological capital and emergent and effective leadership also supports this proposal (Avolio & Luthans, 2008; Jensen & Luthans, 2006; Luthans et al., 2007b). Therefore, I propose that subordinate positive psychological capital will serve as a second mediator through which experienced servant leadership should positively impact the subordinate's own initiation of servant leadership behaviors.

*Hypothesis 8a: Subordinates with stronger positive psychological capital will be more likely to exhibit servant leadership behaviors themselves (compared to subordinates with weaker positive psychological capital).*

*Hypothesis 8b: The positive relationship between supervisor servant leadership behaviors and subordinate servant leadership behaviors is mediated by subordinate positive psychological capital.*



#### **4.6 Gender and gender role schema as moderators of servant leadership**

In order to be useful and predictive over a variety of potential situations, an understanding of servant leadership must take into account some variability in how and whether servant leadership is received. The theory explained above is contingent in many ways upon individual subordinates being "open" to receiving developmental influence from their leaders, but theory and research have demonstrated significant variance in subordinate receptiveness for servant leadership (Liden et al., 2014a; Meuser, Liden, Wayne, & Henderson, 2011; Öner, 2012) and other leadership approaches (Dvir & Shamir, 2003; Ehrhart & Klein, 2001). Greenleaf (1998) voiced similar concerns, wondering regarding "certain mindsets" that could prevent servant leaders from effectively guiding others to become more service-minded individuals. This has led to several calls for examinations of boundary conditions of servant leadership's effectiveness, which have as of yet gone mostly unexplored (Liden et al., 2014a; Peterson et al., 2012; Walumbwa et al., 2010).

Liden and colleagues (2014b) have suggested gender as one such potential moderator. Gender is generally the most salient basis on which individuals categorize one another (Eagly & Karau, 2002), but no studies have yet considered it in combination with servant leadership. In alignment with recent scholarship on gender and leadership (Johnson, Murphy, Zewdie, & Reichard, 2008) and the development of role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002), I propose that gender schemas may also be useful to consider. Separate from an individual's biological sex, a gender schema represents attitudes and beliefs regarding the roles of each sex in society and everyday life (Bem, 1981b). Gender schemas are cognitive structures of associations between gender and characteristics or behaviors learned at an early age; for instance, physical strength is often associated with males and considered unimportant for females in many gender schemas, whereas nurturing behaviors are seen as more important for females than males. These schemas serve as conscious and subconscious heuristics by which individuals judge behavior and generate attitudes (Bem, 1981b), the most common of which is connected to the example above: women

are expected to be more nurturing and sensitive, whereas men are expected to exhibit strength and aggression (Johnson et al., 2008). This has obvious implications for examination of leadership, and is more useful than examining gender alone, as the expectation of how different sexes should act in leader roles is tied to these schemas, rather than gender itself (Kent & Moss, 1994). In other words, men or women may hold masculine or feminine gender schemas and utilize those schemas regardless of their own gender (Bem, 1981b; Larsen & Seidman, 1986). Both this research and more recent studies have demonstrated that gender and gender role schema are conceptually and statistically distinct constructs (Johnson et al., 2008), and I therefore examine both here, starting with the sex of the servant leader.

Leadership is more effective when it is congruent with a follower's implicit perception of what leadership should be; this increases perceived legitimacy and follower receptivity to leader influence (Liden et al., 2014a; Lord et al., 1984), which is, in turn, essential for the influence processes outlined in this theory. Gender role congruity theory explains the puzzling history of lower leadership outcomes for females than males (Cohn, 2000) by suggesting that traditional leadership is seen by most schemas as masculine (Bem, 1981b), and therefore observers of female leaders with these typical schema might perceive incongruence and thus experience dissonance (Eagly & Karau, 2002). At the root of this idea are the conflicting values of communion and agency, or affiliation and harmony on one hand, and assertive struggling for power and control on the other (Bakan, 1966). The 'traditional' gender schema places communion as primarily female, and agency as primarily male (Helgeson, 1994; Johnson et al., 2008). Therefore, when women engage in activities seen as primarily agentic, such as leadership, individuals with weak feminine schemas experience dissonance and judge those women less favorably, commonly known as the "think leader, think male" paradigm. This does not imply that women lead less effectively or even any differently than their male counterparts. There are few differences in the behaviors actually exhibited by male and female leaders (Morrison, White, & Van Velsor, 1987), and women may have an advantage as they are more frequently perceived as transformational (Eagly, Johannesen-

Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003). The point, rather, is that the exact same leader behaviors may be interpreted and processed differently when performed by the two different genders. Dissonance as females engage in leader behaviors deemed particularly masculine (or vice-versa), can lead to less favorable evaluations of those leaders by their subordinates (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Whereas leadership has traditionally been viewed as a highly masculine and agentic activity (Brenner, Tomkiewicz, & Schein, 1989; Schein, 1973), servant leadership is somewhat unique in its primal focus on building relationships and caring for stakeholder needs (Greenleaf, 1977; van Dierendonck, 2011), which are generally considered more feminine and communal activities (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Johnson et al., 2008). Whereas leadership has sometimes been seen as *exclusively* agentic, servant leadership is *not* exclusively communal; rather, it is more balanced with its emphases on both stakeholder welfare and organizational performance (Graham, 1991). Its dual nature suggests that the followers of a female engaging in servant leadership behaviors would be less likely to experience gender role incongruity dissonance than followers of a female engaging in exclusively agentic behaviors, and therefore judge the female leader more favorably and as more credible. This perception of legitimacy, in turn, should make subordinates more susceptible to influence from the female servant leader. Males, meanwhile, may struggle more as servant leaders in accordance with gender role congruity (Eagly & Karau, 2002) as subordinates are exposed to the more communal (and feminine) aspects of servant leadership, generally unexpected of the typical masculine leader (Offermann, Kennedy, & Wirtz, 1994). Subordinates may be surprised by these activities and find them more consistent with the feminine sex, creating dissonance for males attempting to engage in servant leadership. Eagly and Karau specifically allow for this possibility in their role congruity theory, referencing more communal forms of leadership: "... the role incongruity principle allows for prejudice against male leaders, to the extent that there exist leader roles whose descriptive and injunctive content is predominantly feminine. Because leadership is generally masculine, such leader roles are rare..." (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 576).

In support of this idea, empirical research demonstrates that leaders are more likely to be judged unfavorably and as less effective when they break these predominant implicit stereotypes regarding leader sex (Carli, 1990; Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992). Men are evaluated more favorably as leaders than women when they express anger, a typically masculine and agentic emotion, whereas women are seen as more effective leaders than men when they display the more communal emotions of sadness and concern, the latter being particularly relevant for servant leadership (Schaubroeck & Shao, 2012). Displays and behaviors characterized by sensitivity are generally seen as unimportant for male leaders, but highly important for effective leadership by women (Johnson et al., 2008). Male leaders are generally judged on the basis of their strength alone, whereas female leaders are evaluated more positively by subordinates when they display both communal and agentic traits, as prominent in the servant leadership approach (Kark, Waismel-Manor, & Shamir, 2012). This evidence combines to suggest that servant leadership behaviors' effects on the proximal outcomes of prosocial motivation and psychological capital will be more powerful when the leader is female, rather than male, as subordinates will view those leaders as more credible and thus be more open to influence via social learning.

*Hypothesis 9: The positive relationships between supervisor servant leadership behaviors and subordinate (a) prosocial motivation and (b) positive psychological capital will be moderated by supervisor gender, such that these relationships will be more positive when supervisors are female.*

However, this hypothesis assumes that the traditional dominant gender role schema is the only one; in fact, significant variance has been measured in this schema across genders (Bem, 1981b; Larsen & Seidman, 1986). In a relatively unique recent study, Johnson and colleagues (2008) found support for the idea that individuals with more feminine gender-role schemas valued sensitivity as important to leader effectiveness, whereas individuals with more masculine gender-role schemas valued agentic leader behaviors to the total exclusion of communal leadership. This suggests that individuals with weaker female gender role schemas may resist the servant leader's communal overtures, regardless of their or the leader's gender, as they simply do

not see such behaviors as consistent with what leadership should be, leading to perceptions of illegitimacy and resistance (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Lord et al., 1984). Such schemas would impede the effectiveness of social learning via servant leadership behaviors, minimizing the behaviors' impact on subordinates' personal development. Therefore:

*Hypothesis 10: The positive relationships between supervisor servant leadership behaviors and subordinate (a) prosocial motivation and (b) positive psychological capital, will be moderated by subordinate female gender role schema, such that these relationships will be more positive when subordinate female gender role schemas are higher.*

These two hypotheses combine to suggest that servant leadership will be most effective when servant leaders themselves are female, and when followers have relatively strong female and communal gender role schemas.

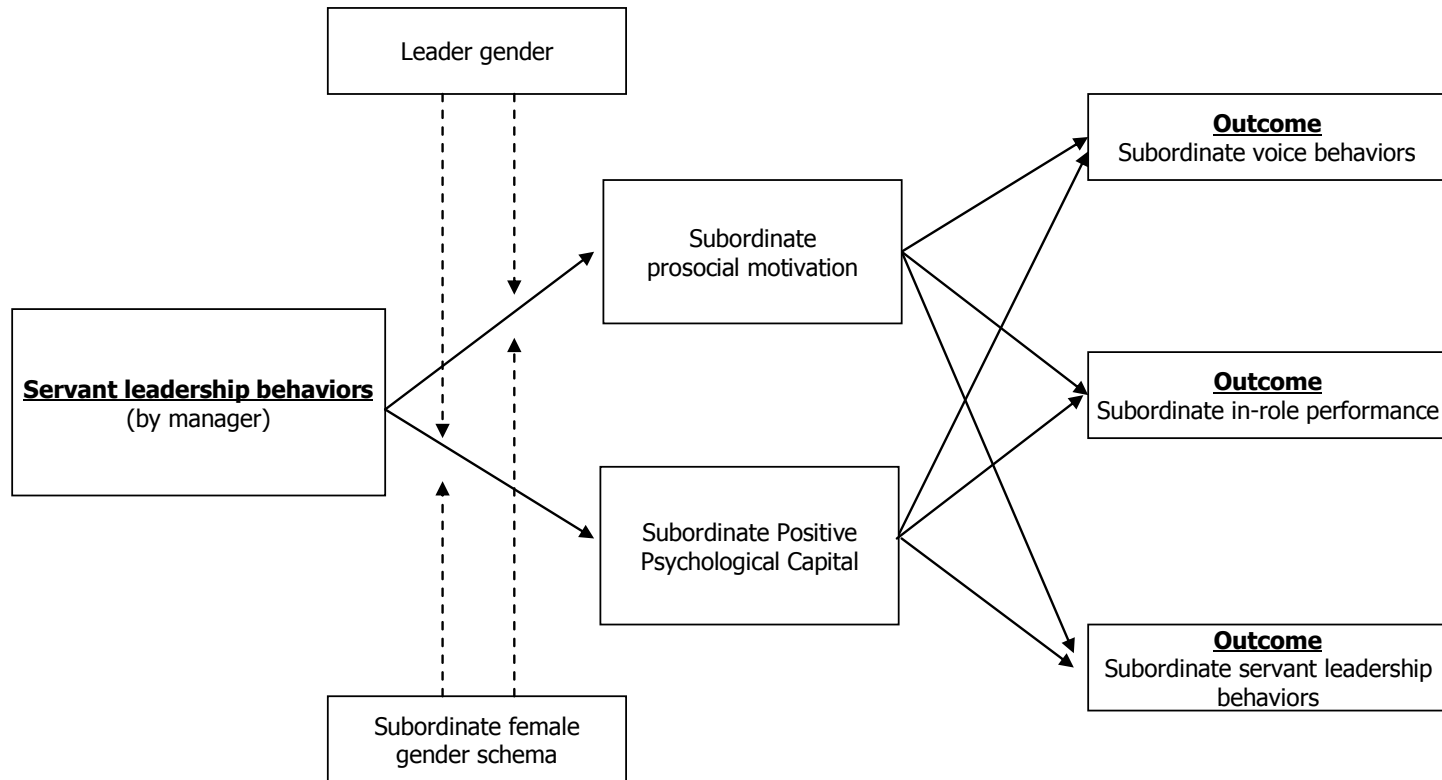
Finally, these hypotheses indicate first-stage moderated mediation of servant leadership to the three distal outcomes of voice, performance, and servant leadership behaviors. If the relationships between manager servant leadership and the proximal subordinate characteristic outcomes are diminished or eliminated due to leader gender or low subordinate female gender role schemas, those behaviors' effects on the distal outcomes would be expected to commensurately diminish.

*Hypothesis 11: Supervisor gender will moderate the strength of the mediated relationships between servant leadership behaviors and the distal outcomes of servant leadership via subordinate (a) prosocial motivation and (b) positive psychological capital, such that the mediated relationships will be stronger under when the supervisor is female.*

*Hypothesis 12: Subordinate female gender role schemas will moderate the strength of the mediated relationships between servant leadership behaviors and the distal outcomes of servant leadership via subordinate (a) prosocial motivation, and (b) positive psychological capital, such that the mediated relationships will be stronger when subordinate female gender role schemas are higher.*

These full moderated mediation models are illustrated in Figure 2.

**FIGURE 2:**  
**Hypothesized model of servant leadership's contingent effects**



Solid lines ( ——— ) represent direct links.  
 Dashed lines ( - - - - - ) represent moderations.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **METHODS AND ANALYSIS**

#### **5.1 Sample and procedure**

I tested these hypotheses with a multi-organizational sample in a temporally lagged field survey design. Although it is generally considered appropriate to use qualitative methodology when engaging in the kind of theory-building discussed here (Edmondson & McManus, 2007), I consider Greenleaf's decades of research (Frick, 2004) to be qualitative theory-in-use, which I combine with the work of Liden and colleagues (Liden et al., 2014a; Liden et al., 2008) to build testable theory. This signals the appropriateness of quantitative methods: with a theory in hand built from decades of qualitative study and this review of the organizational behavior literature as it explains the study's outcomes, my goal is to quantitatively test these predictions in relevant and generalizable contexts.

##### **5.1.1 Research sites and data collection**

I tested this model by studying employees and managers of three organizations all headquartered in the southeastern United States. The first and largest organization (hereafter referred to as Organization 1) was a financial services and transactions organization, at which full-time employees and managers from two large departments participated in the study. The second organization (Organization 2) was a relatively smaller not-for-profit specializing in youth development, and all full-time employees and managers were invited to participate. Finally, the third component of the sample (Organization 3) consisted of several departments within the business school of a large university. This examination of individuals and their managers in a variety of departments, roles, and contexts, is consistent with Schaubroeck and colleagues' (2011) call for research on servant leadership which examines multiple organizations and occupationally diverse individuals. Before data collection began, I met extensively with the leaders of these three organizations to understand the research settings and general context in which leadership

occurred. I learned that although all three organizations were interested in the study itself and its results, none claimed to use a "servant leadership" model, nor were any of the managers of the three organizations greatly familiar with the concept of servant leadership. I conducted approximately 10 hours of qualitative interviews with employees and managers at the first and largest organization to gather more information about the context and gauge the appropriateness of survey instruments. During these interviews I asked many general questions about the working environment, both related and unrelated to this study, so as not to bias any future participants. I detected quite a bit of difference in these interviews as to the nature and perceived qualities of leadership behaviors within the organization.

Where possible, I collected data from participants in multiple waves in order to minimize common method biases (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003) and reduce any feelings of "survey fatigue," given the lengthy nature of some of the scales used in this study. In Organizations 2 and 3, employees completed two surveys spaced approximately three weeks apart with the first containing control variables, the moderating variable of gender role schema, and ratings of their manager's servant leadership behaviors, and the second containing the mediating variables of prosocial motivation and positive psychological capital. Approximately one week later, managers rated their employees on the outcome variables of task performance, voice behaviors, and servant leadership behaviors. Multiple waves of employee surveys were unfortunately not possible in Organization 1 due to limited availability of employees; therefore, in this sample employees completed one survey and their managers completed another, approximately three weeks later.

Individual participants were assigned unique identifying codes in order to associate employees with managers (and with themselves, over time), and no employees or managers were compensated for their participation in these surveys. Managers were given several days to complete their ratings of their employees, so as to provide them adequate opportunity to consider their ratings completely and fully. All employees and managers were assured that their



participation was optional, that their results (or lack of participation) would be confidential, and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. All surveys were conducted online using Qualtrics implementation software.

The response rate for the Time 1 survey was 46% for employees in Organization 1, 94% for Organization 2, and 79% for Organization 3. In Organizations 2 and 3, 84% and 82% of those initial samples also participated in the second survey wave three weeks later (with most of this drop being from employees leaving the organization, three cases wherein technical issues interfered with the survey collection, and one participant who asked to be removed from the study after Wave 1). For the manager ratings, I obtained 51% manager participation in Organization 1, and 100% participation in both of Organizations 2 and 3. Although Organization 1 had a smaller response rate than the other two organizations, the response proportions for that organization are quite comparable to other published studies of servant leadership (Peterson et al., 2012; Schaubroeck et al., 2011; Walumbwa et al., 2010). The final total sample for this study included 122 employees matched with 53 managers across these three organizations (with 82 employees from Organization 1, 22 from Organization 2, and the remainder from Organization 3. Forty-eight percent of the employees surveyed were female, and 36% of the managers surveyed were female. Employees in the final sample were 71% Caucasian, 12% Asian, and 10% African-American, and had 3.7 years of working experience with the organization on average. Managers responding to the survey were 78% Caucasian, 7% Asian, and 6% African-American, with an average of 3.85 years of experience with the organization. There was very little missing data in this final sample, but for those few cases with missing data, values were computed by maximum likelihood estimation (Wothke, 2000).

### **5.1.2 Power analysis**

I conducted a power analysis to identify the sample size needed to reach a minimal .80 level of power (Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003) for these analyses. For all of these power analyses I assumed the traditional .05 level of alpha and used the established guideline .30 value for a

moderate effect size (Cohen, 1988; Cohen, 1992). Power analyses generally assume simple hierarchical regression rather than the more advanced multi-level moderated-mediation modeling required to accurately estimate relationships in the proposed model. Power is notoriously difficult to determine *a priori* for multilevel modeling (Castelloe & O'Brien, 2000), and some scholars have concluded that the intricacies of multilevel modeling involve minimal power change from simple single-level modeling (Bell, Ferron, & Kromrey, 2008; Clarke & Wheaton, 2007) whereas others have maintained that power analyses are particularly important for multilevel modeling (Mathieu, Aguinis, Culpepper, & Chen, 2012). Consistent with the latter approach, I used the MLPowSim package (Browne, Lahi, & Parker, 2009) to create a power analysis script that could be run in R software. MLPowSim generates confidence intervals for balanced or unbalanced designs in multi-level modeling for various expected cluster sizes, estimation methods, and variable configurations, making it a good fit for this study. I calculated power for a clustered model involving eight predictor variables (which included my hypothesized interaction and control variables), assuming a 2-level unbalanced design (as team size may not be uniform), two-tailed tests (.025 alpha on either side), maximum likelihood estimation (Snijders & Bosker, 2011), teams of 2-6 members (given the average team size of about four reported in recent management research; e.g. Chen, Campbell-Bush, Jiing-Lih, Zhiming, & Xin, 2013; Hu & Liden, 2011; Shin, Kim, Lee, & Bian, 2012), and 500 simulations per setting. This resulted in a final required sample size of 26 teams to detect significance in all study coefficients, or approximately 104 individuals. My final sample size exceeded this estimate.

## 5.2 Measures

The following operationalizations were used in this study. A summary of measure information and their time of collection is presented in Table 6 of Appendix A, and a full list of all items in each measure appears in Appendix B. Except where otherwise noted, all responses were made on a 1-to-7 Likert scale, with 1 representing "Strongly disagree" and 7 representing "Strongly agree."

### **5.2.1 Servant leadership (managers and employees)**

I measured manager servant leadership with the 28-item full version of the Servant Leadership Scale by Liden and colleagues (2008), as it is the most prevalent and validated measure of this construct currently extant within the literature. This scale represents servant leadership as a higher-order factor consisting of seven components: creating value for the community, empowering, helping subordinates grow and succeed, putting subordinates first, behaving ethically, conceptual skills, and emotional healing. In the original validation of the Liden scale, the coefficient alpha of each dimension was acceptable, ranging from .76 to .84. Since that original work, the scale has been used exclusively to measure an overall and unidimensional servant leadership construct (Hu & Liden, 2011; Peterson et al., 2012; Schaubroeck et al., 2011), and my coefficient alpha for the full scale was quite high (.98), supporting this approach. This variable was measured by employees, in reference to their managers, at Time 1.

Due to servant leadership theory's emphasis on individualized relationships specific to each particular person (Greenleaf, 1970; van Dierendonck, 2011), and its similarity in dyadic nature to leader-member exchange relationships (Liden et al., 2008; Ng et al., 2008), I measured servant leadership as dyadic in form, allowing it to vary within groups by employee rather than aggregating it to the group level and assuming a more homogeneous leadership construct. Such an approach recognizing the possibility of individual-level effects seems important at this early stage of servant leadership research to accurately conceptualize the individualized and "one-on-one" nature of building unique servant leadership relationships, similar to LMX theory (Liden et al., 2008) and is consistent with published research interested in both individual and organizational outcomes of servant leadership (Hunter et al., 2013; Peterson et al., 2012). On the other hand, though, servant leadership is frequently theorized and found to operate on the team level as well, through mechanisms identical to those in individual level research (Liden et al., 2014b; Schaubroeck et al., 2011), as such leaders are expected to engage in these behaviors

consistently with all of their subordinates. Consideration of team-level effects is suggested by the small cluster size in this study and the rather high agreement on servant leadership within employees of the same manager ( $r_{wg_j} = .93$ , slightly skewed distribution assumption), indicating some consensus as to the "leader as servant" nature of managers in the eyes of their employees. The variance decomposition approach used in my analyses (described in detail in section 5.4.1 below) examines both individual- and group-level effects of independent variables on outcomes, allowing the simultaneous modeling of effects at both levels (Preacher, 2015).

To test the sufficiency of this scale in measuring the full scope of servant leadership behaviors as represented in this paper, I also included eight items from the servant leadership scale by van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2010) measuring behaviors oriented toward task performance and positive change (Yukl, 2012; Yukl et al., 2002), including dimensions of stewardship (sample item: "My manager emphasizes the importance of focusing on the good of the whole"), accountability ("My manager holds me responsible for the work I carry out."), and courage ("My manager takes risks and does what needs to be done in his/her view."). However, a subsequent analysis revealed that these items added little to the scale as a whole, as these three subscales were very strongly correlated with the Conceptual Skills dimension of servant leadership ( $r = .82 - .91, p < .001$ ), and a scale adding these eight items to the established servant leadership scale correlated with the original scale at  $r = .996 (p < .001)$ . Thus, these extra items seemed to add little additional explanatory potential to the operationalization. For this reason, and to ensure the generalizability and comparability of my findings with past servant leadership research, I concluded that the servant leadership scale by Liden and colleagues adequately captures performance and positive change facets of the construct, most prominently through its Conceptual Skills, Empowerment, and Community Citizenship dimensions.

Managers also rated each of their employees on the employees' own servant leadership behaviors several weeks after the original employee surveys. In order to minimize the time spent rating employees and subsequent attrition concerns, I used the short 7-item version of the servant

leadership scale, as validated by Liden and colleagues in several recent papers (Liden et al., 2014b; Liden et al., 2015). This version of the scale uses only the highest loading item from each dimensional subscale of servant leadership and has demonstrated acceptable reliability in previous research ( $\alpha = .84$ ). The appropriateness of using the short version of the scale is also demonstrated by the high correlation of the full 28-item scale with the short 7-item scale for the organization managers ( $r = .98, p < .01$ ). The coefficient alpha for the 7-item scale for employees in this research was .82.

### **5.2.2 Other operationalizations**

**Prosocial motivation.** Employees rated themselves using the five-item prosocial motivation scale (Grant & Sumanth, 2009) for this study (reported  $\alpha = .96$ ). This measure first asks participants, "Why are you motivated to do your work?" followed by items such as "Because I want to help others through my work" and "Because it is important to me to do good for others through my work." The coefficient alpha for this scale in this data collection was .88.

**Positive Psychological Capital.** PsyCap was measured using the PCQ-12, the short version of the established Psychological Capital Questionnaire (Avey, Luthans, & Mhatre, 2008; Luthans et al., 2007a). Both the 12-item version and the larger 24-item versions have consistently produced satisfactory reliability and construct validity structures over many published studies (see Dawkins, Martin, Scott, & Sanderson, 2013, for a review). Several of these studies did not report an exact coefficient alpha level, instead stating only that the alpha was greater than .70 (Avey, Avolio, & Luthans, 2011a; Dawkins et al., 2013). The two that did report specific alphas for the 12-item version had values of .91 (Combs, Milosevic, Jeung, & Griffith, 2012) and .68 for a study using a version of the scale translated to Chinese (Luthans, Avey, Clapp-Smith, & Li, 2008). This 12-item scale has a confirmed dimensional structure measuring the higher-order PsyCap construct. Representative items include "I always look on the bright side of things regarding my job," and "If I should find myself in a jam at work, I could think of many ways to

get out of it." This scale was self-rated by employees, and demonstrated acceptable reliability in this data collection ( $\alpha = .94$ ).

**Gender role schema.** The moderating variable of female gender role schema was measured via the 20-item short-form of the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (Bem, 1981a). Beyond the benefits of its shorter length, the short-form of this scale has been found to result in more reliable representation of this construct (Campbell, Gillaspay, & Thompson, 1997), and it removes potentially 'loaded' items such as "athletic" and "makes decisions easily," (both represented as masculine) and "childlike" and "gullible" (which were both represented as feminine). It does not, however, remove the masculine "Have leadership abilities" item, which is inappropriate for this study - I therefore replaced it with "self-sufficient," a masculine item from the full version. Sample items include "compassionate" and "sympathetic" for femininity, and "independent" and "forceful" for masculinity. Participants were instructed to rate each item on a 1-to-7 Likert scale, with a 1 indicating "Never or almost never true of me," a 4 indicating "Sometimes true of me", and a 7 indicating "Almost always true of me." Bem has reported coefficient alphas of .78 to .87 for these scales, and my coefficient alpha was .90 for female gender schemas.

**Employee voice behaviors.** Employee voice behaviors were measured by their supervisors using Van Dyne and Lepine's (1998) six-item voice behavior scale ( $\alpha = .94$ ). Sample items include "This employee communicates his/her opinions about work issues to others in this group even if his/her opinion is different and others in the group disagree with him/her," and "This employee speaks up and encourages others in this group to get involved in issues that affect the group." The coefficient alpha in this data collection for the voice scale was .91.

**In-role performance.** I measured job performance with seven items specifically designed to measure in-role, non-OCB employee performance (Williams & Anderson, 1991). This scale has a reported reliability alpha of .90, and is one of the more popular scales in research on organizational behavior for measuring simple in-role job performance (Fields, 2002). Sample

items include "This employee adequately completes assigned duties" and "This employee neglects aspects of the job he/she is obligated to perform" (reverse-coded). The coefficient alpha for this scale in this data collection was .91.

**Control variables.** At Level 1, or the "within" / individual level, I control in these analyses for the individual's own gender and his or her tenure with the organization, as these variables could conceivably affect perceptions of leadership, prosocial motivation and psychological capital, and the study outcomes (i.e. Clary et al., 1998; Eagly & Johnson, 1990). At level 2, or the "between" / manager level, these analyses control for the sex of the manager (in those analyses which do not include it as a moderator of interest), the number of employees who directly report to the manager, as this may impact both the degree to which a manager can engage in individualized servant leadership and their ratings of their subordinates (i.e. Le Blanc & González-Romá, 2012; Wheelan, 2009), and dummy variables representing membership in Organizations 2 and 3 (see section 5.3.2 below for an explanation as to why this approach was used rather than a three-level hierarchical approach). I had also planned to control for overall trust in the individual's manager, to account for an alternative mediator by which servant leadership might operate. As reviewed earlier in this proposal, trust is a frequent mechanism of servant leadership used in past research (e.g. Ehrhart, 2004; Hu & Liden, 2011; Schaubroeck et al., 2011; Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010), so I had hoped to demonstrate that the effects proposed here drive results even while controlling for it. For consistency, I used the same six item measure of cognitive and affective trust used by Schaubroeck and colleagues in their study of servant leadership (adapted from McAllister, 1995). However, the trust variables as measured by this scale exhibited extreme collinearity with servant leadership ( $r = .94-.99$ ), rendering it inappropriate for inclusion in this analysis. Due to potential issues with multicollinearity, the trust variables were omitted from all analyses.

## 5.3 Preliminary Analyses

### 5.3.1 Data integrity

Within Organization 1, data was collected from two large and separate departments concurrently, raising the question as to whether those results could be considered homogeneously as different components of Organization 1, or whether differences between the departments would necessitate placing them in different clusters. I conducted three analyses to check for homogeneity between these two organizational departments. First, I checked for simple mean differences in all study variables, between the two departments, using independent *t*-tests. No significant differences were identified in any independent, mediating, or moderating variable, indicating some homogeneity. Second, I reran the analyses described below including department as a dummy-coded moderator of all relationships, to determine if any hypothesized relationships varied by department within this organization. Again, none of these interactions were significant. Finally, I ran all analyses for Organization 1 first including only one department, then the other, and then both simultaneously. Although standard errors and thus significance fluctuated somewhat due to the changing sample size, the coefficients themselves did not substantially change. Altogether, these three analyses suggest that the cases from Organization 1 can be treated as one homogeneous unit for analytical purposes.

Although response rates were quite high in Organizations 2 and 3, the response rates for managers and employees were somewhat lower within the first organization. To check whether any results might be impacted by this missing data, I conducted two analyses. First, I used logistic regression on the full dataset (including participants with partial data, such as those who completed their survey but were not rated by their manager) to determine whether any of the variables in this study predicted whether a case would contain missing data, following the method of Goodman and Blum (1996). No significant differences were found for any variables, indicating no differences between data used and not used within my analyses. I also compared the gender and ethnic make-up of my sample to the sex and race percentages within Organization 1, as



reported to me by the Human Resources department of the organization. Again, there were no significant differences between the data captured in this study and the company's own overall measures. Altogether, these results suggest that the data missing is random, that there is no evidence that employees low (or high) on any study variables self-selected out, and that results from these samples should be generalizable to the organization as a whole.

### **5.3.2 Nested data / random coefficient check**

Although most hypothesized variables are present on level 1, the clustered nature of the data (with employees clustered within managers) suggests a need for a multi-level approach regardless, to avoid conflating the effects of different variance components and thus avoid biased results (Preacher, Zyphur, & Zhang, 2010; Snijders & Bosker, 2011). In order to determine if the nonindependence assumption of Ordinary Least Squares regression (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003) was violated by the nested nature of the data and whether a random coefficient approach was necessary, I generated Intraclass Correlation Coefficients for the group means (ICC(K), which is most useful for determining the reliability of group means and the appropriateness of multi-level modeling; LeBreton & Senter, 2008), clustering all cases by manager. An ICC represents the proportion of variance in a variable that is between level rather than within level (Snijders & Bosker, 2011); in this case, it represents the percent of variance in each study variable that changes by manager, rather than by person. The ICCs for the study variables were substantial, ranging from .08 to .40, indicating a violation of the nonindependence assumption and the appropriateness of a nested approach to the data. A three-level model (with employees nested in managers, nested in the three organizations) was not supported by the data, as ICCs at the higher level were much lower (.04 to .15, with most under .1), poorer overall fit, and several models failing to converge.

### **5.3.3 Common method variance check**

Several of the variables in this study were measured through self-report scales, which suggests a need to investigate the possibility of common method variance (CMV) biases. Some

factors would be expected to mitigate the possibility of common method bias, such as variables being measured, although by the same rater, at different time points (as was the case for two of the three organizations in this sample) and variables having different targets of reference (as employees rated their managers on servant leadership, but rated themselves on prosocial-motivation, for instance). To determine whether CMV played a role in my data, I used the comprehensive CFA marker technique (Richardson et al., 2009; Williams, Hartman, & Cavazotte, 2010), which incorporates a structural equation modeling methodology to identify possible effects of CMV and its effects on variables and their covariances. Given the nested nature of my data, I used a "COMPLEX" analysis methodology in Mplus software, which accounts for unequal selection probability and observation non-independence, using a weighted log likelihood function (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2005). The CFA marker technique uses a "marker" variable conceptually unrelated to the variables of interest, for which I tried two: masculine gender role schema, which has been proposed as unrelated to female gender role schema (Bakan, 1966; Helgeson, 1994; Nguyen, Clark, & Belgrave, 2014), and an overall measure of values strength, including both self- and other-oriented values (Agle et al., 1999; Rokeach, 1973). Models using both marker variables showed no evidence of CMV in the study variables' covariance, and I thus conclude that CMV did not significantly bias the results of my analyses.

#### **5.3.4 Confirmatory factor analysis of data structure**

I conducted confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) of the independent variables to ensure that they were all distinct and that items did not load onto constructs other than those intended. In order to test this, I again used the complex analysis in Mplus to compare three CFA runs: one in which all survey items loaded only onto their respective factors; one in which servant leadership loaded onto its own factor, but all other scales loaded onto a single factor (given that the others all have the self as the referent), and one in which all scales loaded onto a single factor. An analysis of chi-square difference tests confirmed that the hypothesized model was indeed the best fit to the data, fitting better than the 2-factor referent model ( $\chi^2 = 1347.04$ ,  $df=6$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and the 1-factor

model ( $\chi^2 = 848.44$ ,  $df=5$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Confirmatory factor analyses also confirmed that the three dependent variables rated by managers (performance, voice, and servant leader behaviors) loaded to the predicted three variables with better fit than a one-factor model grouping the three outcomes together ( $\chi^2 = 258.43$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

## **5.4 Analysis and Results**

Means, standard deviations, and correlations among variables are displayed in Table 1.

### **5.4.1 Clustered moderation analysis design**

In accordance with the preliminary analyses detailed above, I used a clustered data framework to test the hypotheses suggested by this paper's theory, using the multilevel modeling procedures devised by Preacher and colleagues (Preacher, 2015; Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007; Zhang, Zyphur, & Preacher, 2009). To fully account for distinct sources of between- and within-cluster variance, it is recommended to first decompose all exogenous variables of interest (including independent variables, mediators, and moderators) into their pure between- and within-components. These components of each variable can then be modeled separately within a random coefficient framework to fully account for effects of the variables and any interactions at both levels, without allowing cross-level statistical artifacts to unduly influence results, for instance, by using within-level variance in predictors to model between-level variance in an outcome, or vice-versa (Preacher, 2015; Wang, 2015). This is especially important when cluster sizes are small, as they are in this study. Therefore, I first converted all independent, moderating, and mediating variables into their between- and within- components. Within-components were formed by standardizing all variables by cluster, which by setting all cluster means to zero also centers them within clusters (CWC), thus removing all between-level variance (Enders & Tofighi, 2007). Between-components were formed by creating cluster means for these variables and then centering them to the grand-mean, removing all within-level variance. Significance in either the between- or within-components indicates a significant effect of an independent variable on a

**Table 1:**  
**Means, standard deviations, & correlations for study variables**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>s.d.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
1. Organization 2	0.21	0.40												
2. Organization 3	0.10	0.29	-.20											
3. Employee gender	0.48	0.50	.23	.06										
4. Employee tenure	3.70	1.40	-.07	.12	.01									
5. Manager gender	0.34	0.47	.17	.04	.22	-.11								
6. Manager number of reports	5.17	4.17	-.25	-.05	-.19	-.29	-.23							
7. Servant leadership	4.80	1.40	.09	-.07	-.05	.06	-.05	.20						
8. Female gender role schema	0.80	0.13	.02	.05	.18	.07	-.02	-.17	.04					
9. Prosocial Motivation	6.05	0.80	.16	.07	.09	.03	.11	-.03	.19	.31				
10. Positive Psychological Capital	5.47	0.80	-.09	.11	-.09	.09	.01	.04	.34	.21	.55			
11. Voice behaviors	5.62	0.94	-.07	-.09	-.10	-.04	-.06	.33	.19	-.12	.08	.18		
12. In-role performance	6.14	0.89	-.14	-.09	-.02	.00	.02	.12	.19	-.15	.02	.09	.63	
13. Employee Servant Leadership	5.37	0.82	.04	-.17	-.09	-.07	-.10	.44	.25	-.07	.07	.16	.72	.58

Bivariate correlations for N=122. Absolute values greater than .17 are  $p < .05$  (two-tailed). Absolute values greater than .24 are  $p < .01$  (two-tailed).

dependent variable, regardless of which component in particular achieves significance (Preacher, 2015). Significance was determined by examining coefficient confidence intervals, and pseudo- $R^2$  for the multi-level models was computed using the formulas by Snijders and Bosker (2011). All analyses were conducted with Mplus statistical software.

Both the between- and within-level components were entered into all models, separately predicting within- and between-level variance of outcomes. In the case of interactions of two level 1 variables, such as is the case for H10 and H12 (servant leadership with female gender role schema), both level 1 variables would be expected to also have some variance at level 2 (Snijders & Bosker, 2011); that is, a level 1 variable in a clustered design by nature has both within and between variance. This indicates the presence of four potential distinct main effects on an independent variable that should be considered in a multi-level interaction: effects driven by the level 1 variance of the first variable (X), the level 1 variance of the second variable (W), the level 2 variance of X, and the level 2 variance of W. These effects may all act on the independent variable (Y) independently, and in combination as would be expected in an interaction. The question of exactly how such decomposed variance can impact dependent variables in multi-level interactions, though, is seldom examined.

To identify the proper format in which to model and test these cross-level interactions, I conducted a series of Monte Carlo studies, generating multi-level data sets and examining their interaction terms. Four separate interactions are possible in a decomposed variance approach to multi-level moderation (or moderated mediation): one interacting the L1 components of both variables; two interacting the L1 component of one variable with the L2 component of the other; and one interacting the L2 components of both variables (Preacher, 2015). The first and last interactions are relatively straightforward when considered in light of the fact that purely within-level variance has no between-level variance and thus cannot predict between-level variance in an outcome, and vice-versa. An interaction of two L1 components can explain within-level variance in a dependent Y variable, but not between-level variance as there is no between-level variance

contained within a purely L1 variable. Similarly, the interaction of the two L2 components can only predict between-level variance in a Y, but not within-level variance.

The case of the cross-level interaction of the variance components is not so intuitive, however, and is rarely addressed in the literature. Would an interaction of the L1 (within) component of an X, and the L2 (between) component of a W, predict variance in a fundamentally L1 Y outcome at the within (L1) level, the between (L2) level, both, or neither? Starting with the between-variance of Y, in order to predict L2 variance of Y above and beyond that explained by the L2W variance component alone, theoretically the interaction term would need to include or create additional L2 variance above and beyond that included in the L2W component itself. As the L1X includes no L2 (between) variance at all, the interaction of variance components of L1X and L2W would theoretically include no between-variance not already present in L2W alone, and no additional between-cluster predictive power beyond that explained by L2W alone. My Monte Carlo analyses confirmed this theory: there is no between-level variance in an interaction of an L1X by an L2W. The interaction is a product of a group-mean-centered variable and a within-group constant (the L2 group mean), causing all group averages to be zero. Therefore, both theoretically and mathematically, there is no between-level variance in a cross-level interaction term made up of pure within- and between-variance components, and thus such an interaction cannot predict between-group variance in a Y.

The case of predicting within-group variance in Y, above and beyond what an L1X would predict on its own, is a bit trickier. Theoretically, one might at first expect the same logic to apply for within-group variance as applied for between-group variance above; that is, as a purely level 2 variance component (L2W) contains no within-group variance, then the interaction of L1X and L2W might logically be expected to contain no level 1 variance beyond what L1X includes on its own. Mathematically, however, this is not quite the case. Monte Carlo analyses revealed that the correlation between L1X and the level 1 component of the cross-level interaction term (which was identical to the interaction term itself, as such an interaction includes

no between-level variance) was quite low in most runs (absolute value of  $r = .01-.20$ ), in fact much lower than the correlation normally generated between a simple single-level interaction term and either of its components. This variation between L1X and the interaction term was mostly driven by the sign of the L2W (positive or negative), inverting the variance of L1X for groups below the group average of W. Put another way, although L2W can contribute no L1 variance to an interaction conceptually or mathematically, combining it with the L1X variance as a weighting factor (and, specifically, inverting the variance for those clusters below the mean in W) results in a new and uncorrelated L1 variance component that inverts the original L1X in accordance with each cluster's weight and relative standing on the L2W component, thus creating new L1 variance that can be modeled.

However, although the cross-level interaction contains new within-group variance which could be modeled to explain within-group variance in Y, the question remained as to whether this new variance was truly meaningful, representing actual cross-level predictive effects, or merely a meaningless statistical artifact. I continued my Monte Carlo analyses in an attempt to answer this question, creating balanced data sets of 150 clusters and 600 cases (4 per cluster). In these data sets, I generated a Y variable through a joint interaction of the L1 component of an X and the decomposed L2 component (cluster means) of a W. I accomplished this by creating the Y variable through a formula of an interaction of the purely level-1 component of an X and the purely level-2 component of a W, with each component weighted into the formula by a random number. After generating the data sets, I tested models in Mplus to determine whether the interaction of the cross-level variance components of X and W could identify this relationship, while controlling for the interactions of the purely between- and within-components as well as the main effects of X and W. The proposed interaction of L1X by L2W did successfully detect the interaction in all runs, in the expected interaction term. This provides evidence that within-group variance predicted by decomposed cross-level interaction terms is potentially meaningful.

Therefore, to completely account for the effects of interactions of level 1 variables on a level 1 outcome (such as performance, voice, or employee servant leadership) in a clustered design, four interactions are necessary: an interaction of the L2 components of both variables predicting variance at the between-level, an interaction of the two L1 components predicting within-variance, as well as two cross-level component interactions (L1X by L2W, and L2X by L1W), also predicting variance at the within level. For an interaction of a level 1 variable with a level 2 variable, such as is the case for H9 and H11 (servant leadership with leader gender), only two interactions are necessary to predict variance on a level 1 outcome in a clustered design. The interaction of the L2 component of the level 1 variable, with the L2 variable, can affect between-group variance in an outcome. The cross-level interaction of the L1 component of the level 1 variable, with the L2 variable, can affect within-group interaction in an outcome. The other two interactions discussed above (L2X by L1W, and L1X by L1W) do not pertain to an interaction of a pure level 2 variable with a level 1 variable, as the level 2 variable (W, or leader gender in this example) has no within-group variance to model.

#### **5.4.2 Results of hypothesis tests**

The results for the first set of hypotheses are shown in Table 2. The first hypothesis proposed that servant leadership would be related to prosocial motivation, and the second proposed a link between servant leadership and positive psychological capital. The impact of servant leadership on prosocial motivation only reached marginal significance ( $\gamma = .17, p < .1$ ), failing to support the first hypothesis. Servant leadership did significantly predict positive psychological capital, however, in the direction specified ( $\gamma = .29, p < .05$ ), supporting H2.

To test the prediction that prosocial motivation would be related to voice (H3a) and that prosocial motivation would mediate a relationship between servant leadership and voice (H3b), I first tested a model in which prosocial motivation, on its own, predicted voice. As shown in Table 2, this prediction was supported ( $\gamma = .15, p < .05$ ). To test H3b, I ran the same model, but



**Table 2:**  
**Multilevel model results for Hypotheses 1-8**

	H1: Prosocial Motivation	H3a: Voice	H3b: Voice (mediated)	H5a: In- role Perf.	H5b: In- role Perf. (med.)	H7a: Employee Servant Leadership	H7b: Employee Servant Leadership (mediated)	H2: PsyCap	H4a: Voice	H4b: Voice (mediated)	H6a: In-role Perf.	H6b: In- role Perf. (med.)	H8a: Employee Servant Leadership	H8b: Employee Servant Leadership (mediated)
Within-level (L1)														
Control variables:														
Female	0.23	-0.17	-0.12	-0.07	-0.04	-0.10	-0.06	-0.08	-0.06	-0.04	-0.05	-0.04	-0.05	-0.03
Tenure	0.00	-0.03	-0.01	-0.02	-0.01	0.06	0.05	0.04	0.02	-0.01	0.02	-0.02	0.06	0.05
Servant Leadership	0.17		0.15*		0.08		0.18*	0.29*		0.15*		0.06		0.17
Prosocial Motivation		0.15*	0.13	0.02	0.00	0.01	-0.02							
Psych. Cap.								0.11	0.07	0.08	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.02
<i>Pseudo-R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.04	0.04	0.06	0.19	0.01	0.02	0.07	0.10	0.02	0.05	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.07
Between-level (L2)														
Control variables:														
Organization 2	0.42*	-0.07	-0.09	-0.56	-0.59	0.20	0.17	-0.28	0.07	0.02	-0.53	-0.60	0.28	0.27
Organization 3	0.15	-0.07	-0.03	-0.35	-0.3	-0.24	-0.22	0.17	0.17	-0.13	-0.36	-0.30	-0.30	-0.28
Manager reports	0.00	0.05*	0.03	0.00	-0.01	0.06**	0.05**	0.00	0.05*	0.03*	0.00	-0.01	0.06**	0.06**
Servant Leadership	0.08		0.24		0.24		0.09	0.12		0.19		0.25		0.06
Prosocial Motivation		0.09	0.04	0.03	-0.01	0.09	0.08							
Psych. Cap.								0.52*	0.44	0.10	-0.02	0.33	0.33	0.31
<i>Pseudo-R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.13	0.11	0.20	0.20	0.36	0.55	0.49	0.15	0.24	0.29	0.20	0.36	0.63	0.58

Unstandardized coefficients reported for N=122. \* 95% two-tailed CI excludes zero. \*\* 99% two-tailed CI excludes zero.

including servant leadership as an additional predictor, and simultaneously modeled servant leadership as predicting prosocial motivation (the results of this first part of the model are shown in H1). Although a direct and positive effect of servant leadership on employee voice behaviors did emerge in this analysis ( $\gamma = .15, p < .05$ ), mediation is not supported as servant leadership only marginally predicted prosocial motivation, the coefficient from prosocial motivation to voice became insignificant, and tests of indirect effects (implemented in Mplus with the "MODEL INDIRECT" command) also were insignificant (estimates = .02 & .00,  $p > .05$ ). Therefore, although servant leadership does positively impact voice behaviors, this data does not support a mediation through prosocial motivation, and H3b is not supported.

I tested the predictions that positive psychological capital would predict employee voice behaviors (H4a) and that PsyCap would mediate a relationship between servant leadership and voice (H4b) in the same manner. As predicted, positive psychological capital did predict voice behaviors ( $\gamma = .52, p < .05$ ), and although the magnitude of this association was reduced with the introduction of servant leadership into the equation, it remained significant within a 90% confident interval ( $\gamma = .44, p < .10$ ). Methodologists have argued that one-tailed tests are sufficient tests of hypotheses in mediation models (Preacher et al., 2010), so this provides some support for the prediction of mediation. As a significant relationship still exists between servant leadership and voice behaviors in the H4b model ( $\gamma = .15, p < .05$ ), this suggests partial mediation of the relationship by positive psychological capital.

No portions of Hypotheses 5 or 6 were supported by this analysis. Neither prosocial motivation nor positive psychological capital predicted in-role task performance, nor did they mediate any effects of servant leadership on that outcome. Although the final outcome of employee servant leadership behaviors was not predicted by either prosocial motivation or positive psychological capital, some evidence did emerge supporting direct, unmediated relationships from manager servant leadership to employee servant leadership. In both the H7b

and H8b analyses, relationships of some significance (H7b:  $\gamma = .18, p < .05$ ; H8b:  $\gamma = .17, p < .10$ ) emerged when both servant leadership and its proposed mediators were entered into the model simultaneously. Therefore, although Hypotheses 7 and 8 were unsupported, some evidence nonetheless emerged linking servant leadership in a direct fashion to the outcome of employee servant leadership behaviors.

Hypothesis 9 is the first moderation prediction, using the gender of the leader as a

**Table 3:**  
**Multilevel moderation results for Hypotheses 9-10**

	H9a: Prosocial Motivation	H9b: PsyCap	H10a: Prosocial Motivation	H10b: PsyCap
<b>Within-level (L1)</b>				
Control variables:				
Female	0.21	-0.11	0.16	-0.09
Tenure	0.00	0.04	-0.01	0.04
Independent variables:				
Servant Leadership	0.24*	.41**	0.12	0.27*
Female Manager				
SL x FM (L1 x L2)	-0.29	-0.48		
Female Schema			0.40**	0.19
SL x FS (L1 x L1)			-0.30	0.20
SL x FS (L1 x L2)			0.51	-0.05
SL x FS (L2 x L1)			-0.42	-2.43
<i>Pseudo-R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.06	0.14	0.19	0.17
<b>Between-level (L2)</b>				
Control variables:				
Organization 2	0.41*	-0.29	0.23	-0.50
Organization 3	0.10	0.16	0.10	0.13
Manager reports	0.01	0.00	0.03	0.03*
Independent variables:				
Servant Leadership	0.05	0.12	-0.06	-0.06
Female Manager	0.22	0.07		
SL x FM	0.14	-0.01		
Female Schema			2.51*	1.9**
SL x FS (L2 x L2)			3.30**	4.13**
<i>Pseudo-R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.17	0.16	0.37	0.47

Unstandardized coefficients reported for N=122.

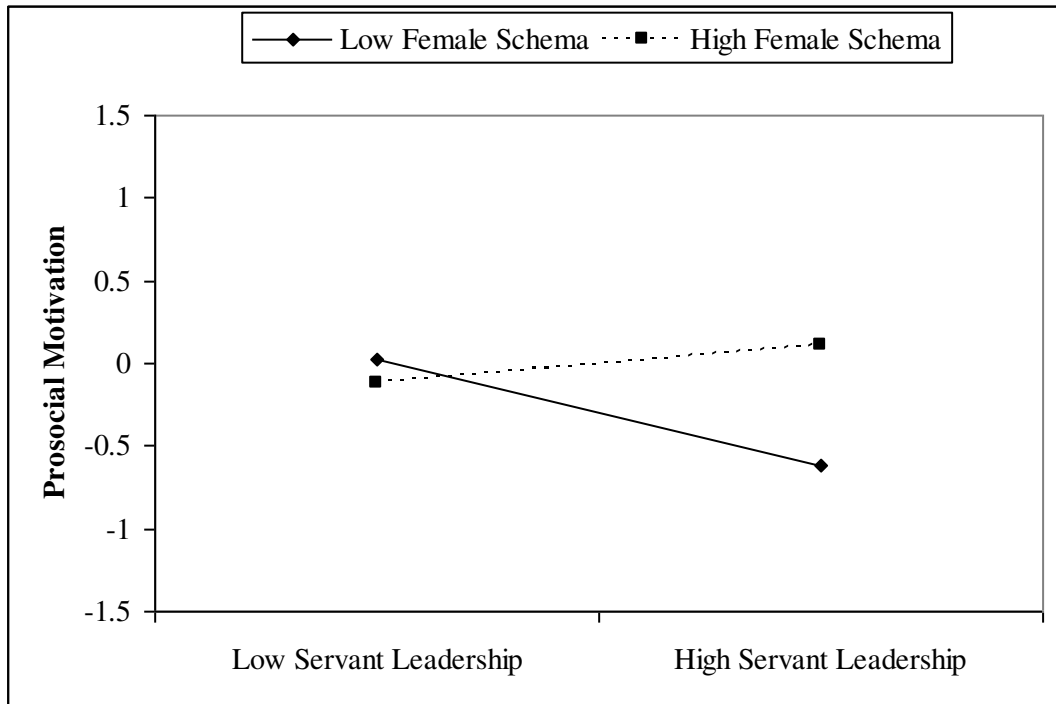
\* 95% CI excludes zero. \*\* 99% CI excludes zero.

moderator of servant leadership's effects on prosocial motivation (H9a) and psychological capital (H9b). As discussed earlier, in a L1 (servant leadership) by L2 (leader gender) interaction, two interaction terms are needed in an HLM framework to capture the full moderation: an interaction of the between-components of each variable (L2 servant leadership by L2 leader gender), and a cross-level interaction of L1 servant leadership by L2 leader gender. The results for all moderation hypotheses are shown in Table 3. As shown, neither hypothesis involving leader gender is supported, as all interaction terms fail to reach significance.

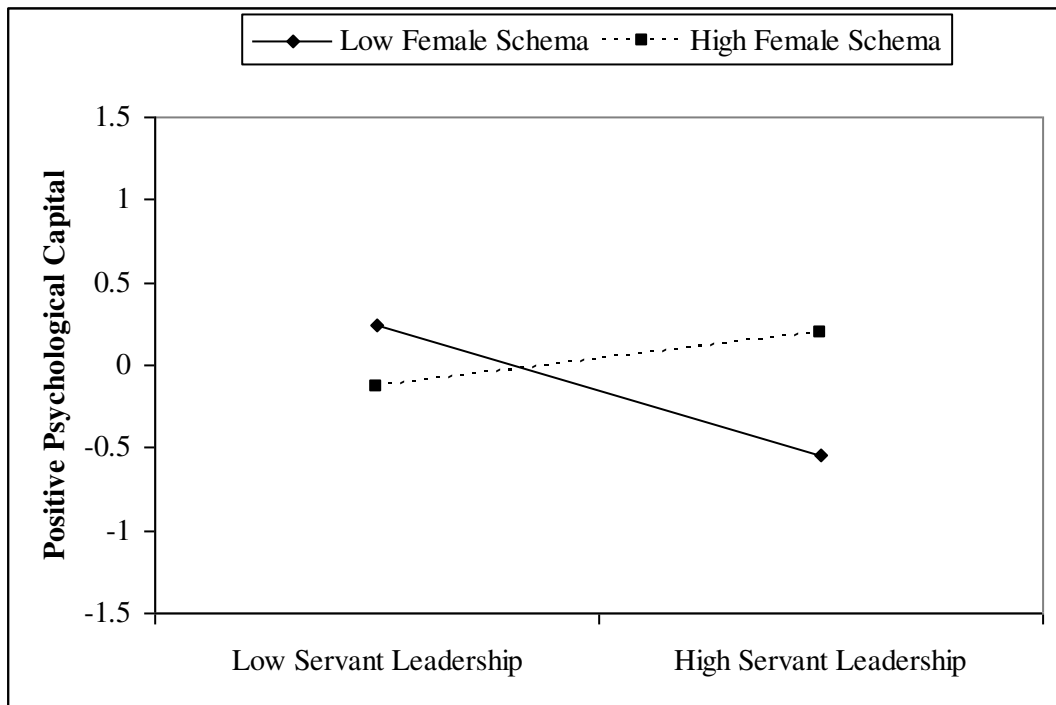
Hypothesis 10, on the other hand, which uses the female gender role schema of the focal employee as the moderator of servant leadership, sees some support for both outcomes of prosocial motivation (H10a) and positive psychological capital (H10b). In this case of two level-1 variables jointly predicting a level-1 outcome in a clustered dataset, four interactions are needed to fully test the possible single-level and cross-level effects on the dependent variables. A significant moderation, interacting the level-2 variance of both predictors, was significant for prosocial motivation ( $\gamma = 3.30$ ;  $p < .01$ ), indicating a positive slope of 0.18 ( $p < .10$ ) at high levels of female gender schema, and a negative slope of -0.29 ( $p < .10$ ) at low levels of female gender schema. The pattern was the same for PsyCap: a positive slope of .23 ( $p < .01$ ) at high levels of female gender schema, and a negative slope of -.35 ( $p < .05$ ) at low levels of female gender schema. These two interactions are plotted in Figures 3a-3b, showing the pattern described above and fully supporting both components of Hypothesis 10.

Given the lack of significance for interactions of manager gender with servant leadership in predicting mediators, I was particularly interested in tests of direct effects of the interactions on the outcomes for Hypothesis 11, which are shown in Table 4. Although the moderated mediations were insignificant as expected given the results of Hypothesis 9 above, direct and unmediated effects of the proposed interaction were salient throughout these analyses, indicating that servant leadership and manager gender do in fact affect these outcomes, but in a direct rather than a mediated manner. Specifically, the interactions of servant leader behaviors and manager gender

**Figure 3a:**  
Servant leadership and female schema predicting prosocial motivation



**Figure 3b:**  
Servant leadership and female schema predicting PsyCap



**Table 4:**  
**Multilevel moderated mediation results for Hypothesis 11**

	H11a: Voice	H11a: In- role Perf.	H11a: Employee Servant Leadership	H11b: Voice	H11b: In- role Perf.	H11b: Employee Servant Leadership
<b>Within-level (L1)</b>						
Control variables:						
Female	0.21	0.23	0.21	-0.11	-0.11	-0.11
Tenure	-0.01	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.04	0.04
Independent variables:						
Servant Leadership on M	0.24*	0.24*	0.24*	0.41**	0.41**	0.41**
Female Manager on M						
SL x FM (L1 X L2) on M	-0.29	-0.29	-0.29	-0.48	-0.48	-0.48
Prosocial Motivation on Y						
PsyCap on Y				0.06	0.09	0.02
Servant Leadership on Y						
SL x FM (L1 x L2) on Y	0.21*	0.15	0.21	0.21*	0.13	0.19
	-0.23	-0.24	-0.09	-0.23	-0.22	-0.06
<i>Pseudo-R<sup>2</sup></i>	0.07	0.00	0.06	0.06	0.02	0.06
<b>Between-level (L2)</b>						
Control variables:						
Organization 2	0.41*	0.41*	0.41*	-0.29	-0.29	-0.29
Organization 3	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.16	0.16	0.16
Manager reports	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00
Independent variables:						
Servant Leadership on M	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.12	0.12	0.12
Female Manager on M	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.07	0.07	0.07
SL x FM on M	0.14	0.14	0.14	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01
Prosocial Motivation on Y						
PsyCap on Y				0.43†	-0.03	0.30†
Servant Leadership on Y						
Female Manager on Y	0.14	0.07	0.10	0.09	0.07	0.08
SL x FM on Y	0.05	0.47*	0.07	0.03	0.45	0.07
	0.66*	0.78**	0.41*	0.66**	0.77**	0.41*
Slope for Female Mgrs. (X to M to Y)						
	0.01	-0.02	0.01	0.05	0.00	0.04
Slope for Male Mgrs. (X to M to Y)						
	0.00	-0.01	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.04
Slope for Female Mgrs. (X to Y)						
	0.80**	0.85**	0.51**	0.74**	0.84**	0.49**
Slope for Male Mgrs. (X to Y)						
	0.14	0.07	0.10	0.09	0.07	0.08
<i>Pseudo-R<sup>2</sup></i>	0.35	0.71	0.34	0.42	0.71	0.40

Unstandardized coefficients reported for N=122.

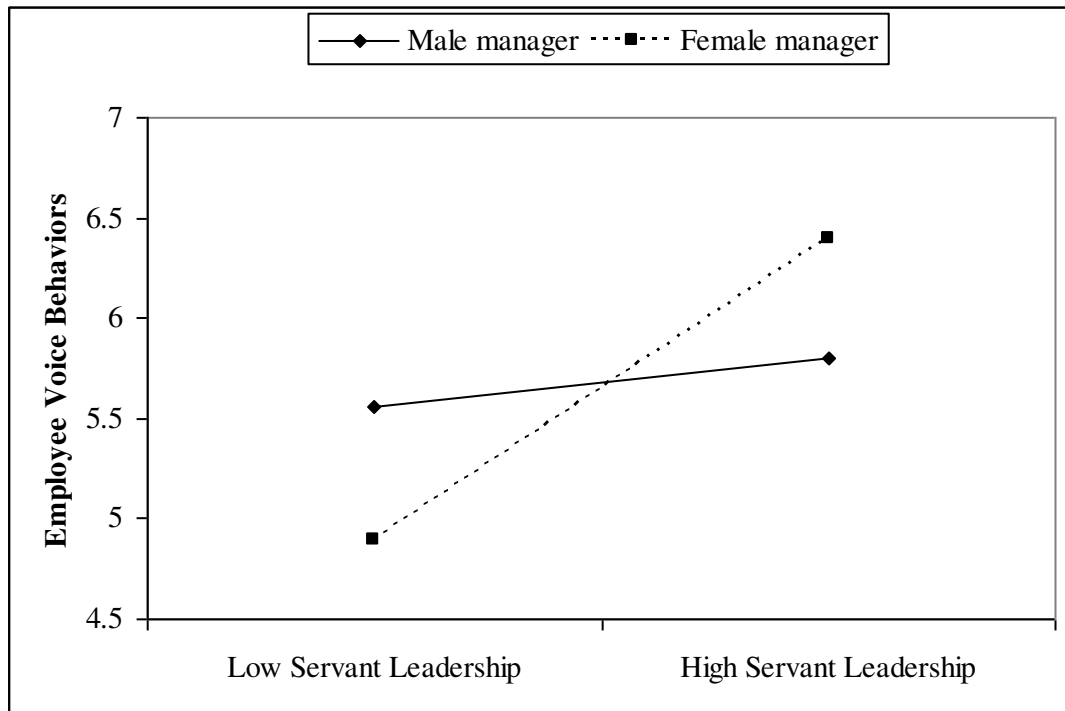
† One-tailed 95% CI excludes zero. \* 95% CI excludes zero. \*\* 99% CI excludes zero.

Unless otherwise noted, coefficients load onto mediator (prosocial motivation or PsyCap).

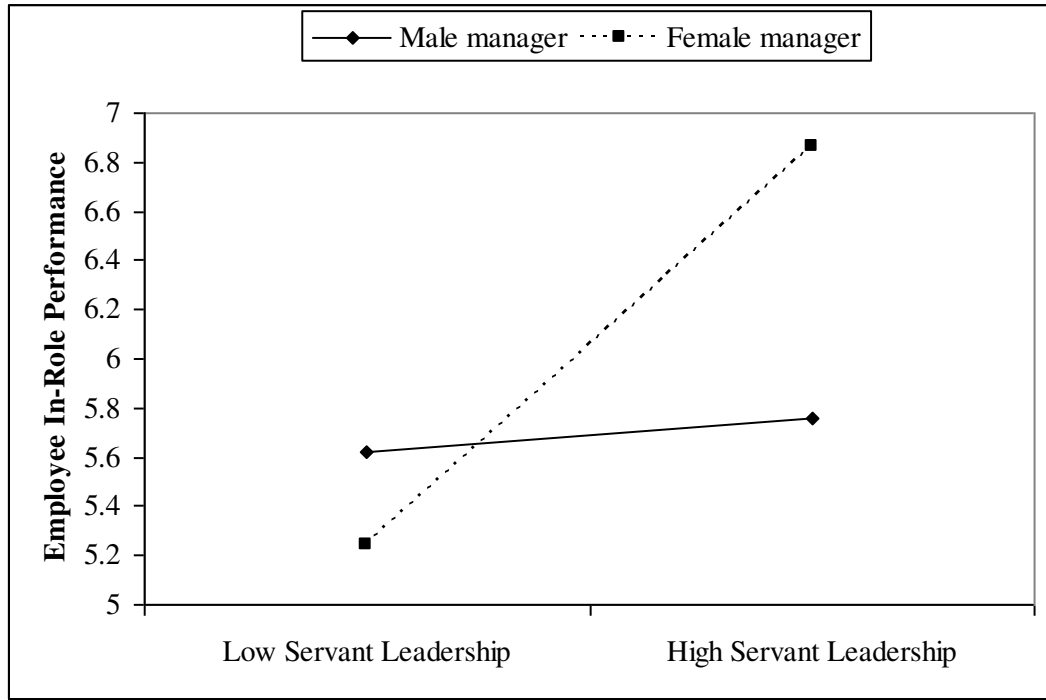
for employee voice behaviors ( $\gamma = .66, p < .05$ ), in-role performance ( $\gamma = .77, p < .01$ ), and employee servant leadership behaviors ( $\gamma = .41, p < .05$ ) were all significant. Analysis of simple slopes for these moderations all demonstrated the same pattern: significant positive slopes relating servant leadership behaviors to outcomes for female managers (slope coefficients ranged from .49 to .85, all  $p < .01$ ), but non-significant slopes for male managers (.07 to .14, all  $p > .10$ ). These interactions of servant leadership and manager gender to predict these three outcomes are illustrated in Figures 4a-4c. Although this fails to support the moderated mediation hypotheses presented in H11, these results nonetheless provide substantial support for the overarching theory that females may realize outcome advantages in their enactment of servant leadership.

Finally, Table 5 illustrates results for Hypothesis 12, which predicted that the mediated relationships would be moderated in the first stage by female gender schema. Partial

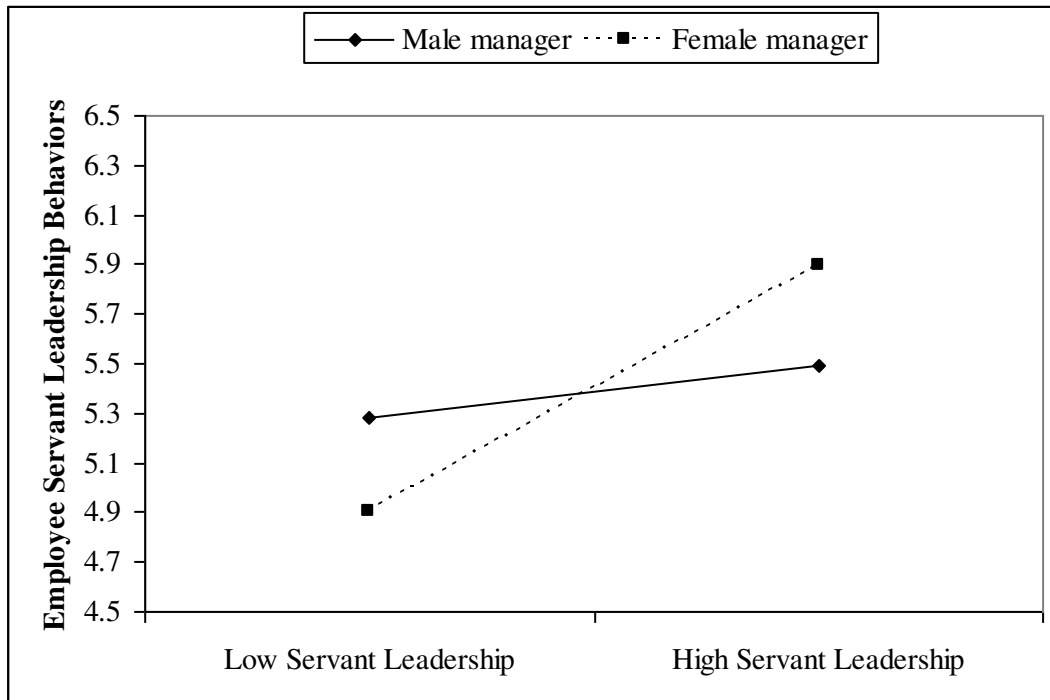
**Figure 4a:**  
**Servant leadership and manager gender predicting voice**



**Figure 4b:**  
Servant leadership and manager gender predicting performance



**Figure 4c:**  
Servant leadership and manager gender predicting employee servant leadership





**Table 5:**  
**Multilevel moderated mediation results for Hypothesis 12**

	H12a: Voice	H12a: In- role Perf.	H12a: Employee Servant Leadership	H12b: Voice	H12b: In- role Perf.	H12b: Employee Servant Leadership
<b>Within-level (L1)</b>						
Control variables:						
Female	0.24*	0.24*	0.24*	-0.09	-0.09	-0.09
Tenure	-0.02	-0.02	-0.02	0.04	0.04	0.04
Independent variables:						
Servant Leadership on M	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.20	0.20	0.20
Female Schema on M	0.39**	0.39**	0.39**	0.18†	0.18†	0.18†
SL x FS (L1 x L1) on M	-0.16	-0.16	-0.16	0.20†	0.20†	0.20†
SL x FS (L1 x L2) on M	-0.07	-0.07	-0.07	-0.05	-0.05	-0.05
SL x FS (L2 x L1) on M	-1.13	-1.13	-1.13	-2.44	-2.44	-2.44
Prosocial Motivation on Y	0.14†	0.01	0.00			
PsyCap on Y				0.08	0.12	0.08
<i>Pseudo-R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01
<b>Between-level (L2)</b>						
Control variables:						
Organization 2	0.23	0.23	0.23	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50
Organization 3	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.13	0.13	0.13
Manager reports	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03*	0.03*	0.03*
Independent variables:						
Servant Leadership on M	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.06	0.06	0.06
Female Schema on M	2.81*	2.81*	2.81*	2.27**	2.27**	2.27**
SL x FS (L2 x L2) on M	3.30**	3.30**	3.30**	4.13**	4.13**	4.13**
Prosocial Motivation on Y	0.15	0.05	0.13			
PsyCap on Y				0.57*	0.11	0.59*
Indirect Effect at High Female Role	0.35	0.12	0.30	1.70†	0.32	1.78†
Indirect Effect at Low Female Role	-0.34	-0.11	-0.29	-1.63†	-0.31	-1.70†
Index of moderated mediation	0.48	0.02	0.06	0.22*	0.45	2.46†
<i>Pseudo-R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.02	0.22	0.06	0.02	0.15	0.33

Unstandardized coefficients reported for N=122.

† One-tailed 95% CI excludes zero. \* 95% CI excludes zero. \*\* 99% CI excludes zero.

Unless otherwise noted, coefficients load onto mediator (prosocial motivation or PsyCap).

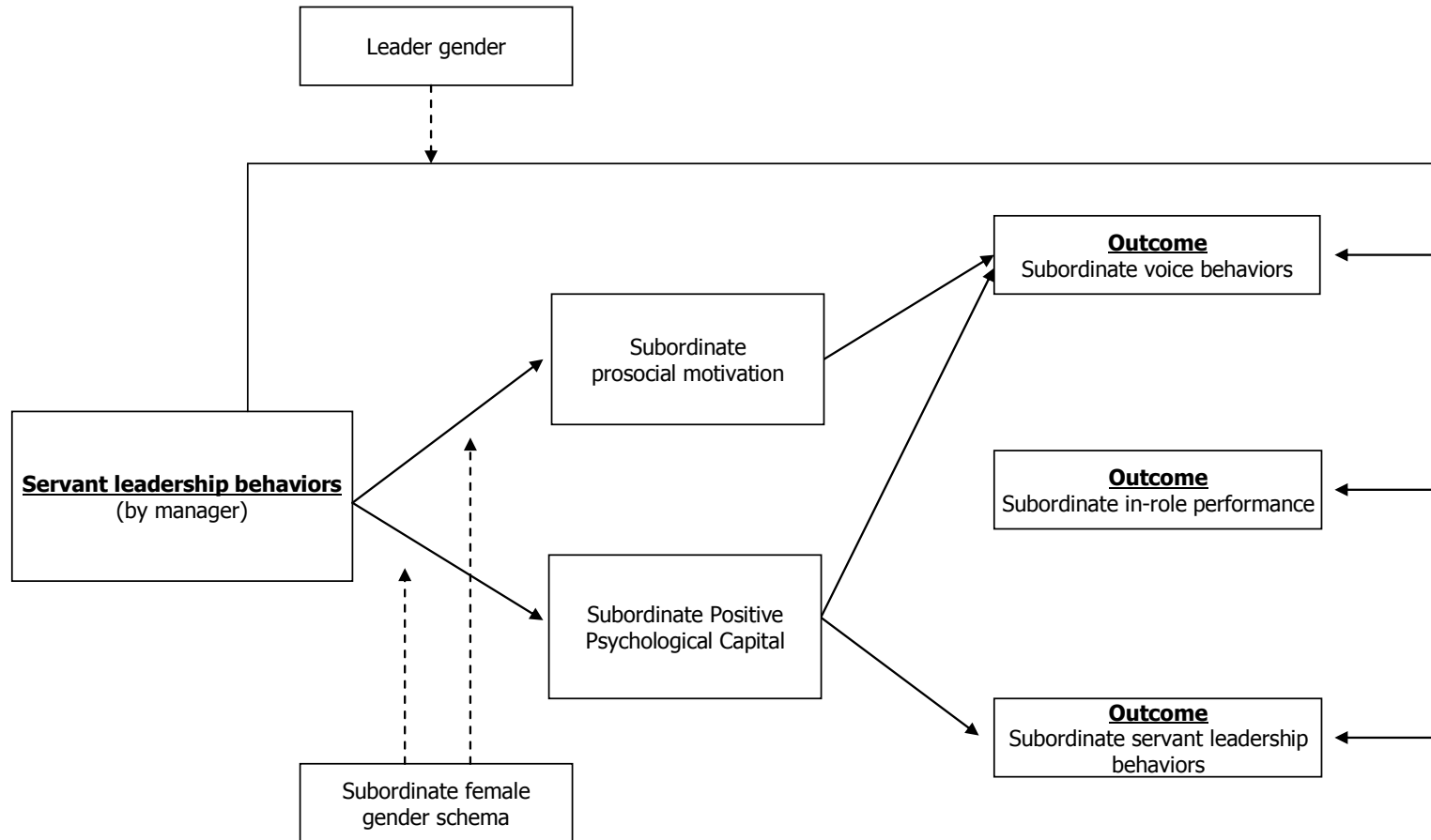
Reported indices of moderated mediation are for L2 x L2 interactions - no other indices were significant.

support is provided to this hypothesis by the results shown here. All six first-stage moderations were significant, but the connections of the mediators to the outcomes was inconsistent. The voice outcome of H12b was supported, as all hypothesized paths were significant, as was the index of moderated mediation (index = .22,  $p < .05$ ). Slopes for the conditional indirect effect were marginally significant in the direction specified, such that individuals with high female schemas were more affected by servant leadership, promoting their voice behaviors through the mediator of positive psychological capital ( $\gamma = 1.70, p < .10$ ), whereas individuals with weaker female role schemas were negatively affected by the servant leadership behaviors ( $\gamma = -1.63, p < .10$ ). H12b also received some support from the employee servant leadership outcome, which had significant paths, a marginally significant index of moderated mediation (index = 2.46,  $p < .10$ ), and slopes similar to the voice outcome (high female schema:  $\gamma = 1.78, p < .10$ ; low female schema:  $\gamma = -1.70, p < .10$ ).

Some evidence also emerged for a first-stage moderation of female schema on the relationship paths of servant leadership to prosocial motivation to employee voice behaviors (within a 90% confidence interval at the within level), although the index of moderated mediation was not significant. The other three proposed moderated mediations in H12 (prosocial motivation mediating in-role performance and employee servant leadership behaviors, and PsyCap mediating in-role performance) were not supported as no paths existed from the mediators to the outcomes.

In a separate post-hoc analyses, I also ran simple moderation models to check whether the interactions with female gender role schema directly predicted these outcomes, without the mediating influences of prosocial motivation or positive psychological capital. None of these relationships were significant, indicating that the interaction paths were somewhat different for the leader gender and subordinate female role schema moderators. These findings are illustrated as a whole in Figure 5, and the implications of these results are discussed in the following section.

**FIGURE 5:**  
**Final model of servant leadership's contingent effects**



Solid lines ( — ) represent direct links.  
 Dashed lines ( - - - - - ) represent moderations.

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION

#### 6.1 Summary of results

Given the large number of hypotheses and predictions tested in this study, this section opens with a restatement of the major findings, illustrated in Figure 5 and primarily contained within the analytical models of moderated mediation, as given the significant results found in those models, they contain the most complete information in this research regarding servant leadership's effects. Servant leadership affected all three predicted outcomes of employee voice, in-role performance, and servant leadership behaviors, through a variety of different mechanisms and some contingencies. As predicted, servant leadership behaviors were linked to subordinate prosocial motivation and positive psychological capital, although those effects proved to be dependent upon subordinate female gender role schema, such that servant leadership was effective at growing these personal characteristics when subordinates were high in female gender role schema, but less effective for subordinates low in female gender role schema. Of the two mediators, there was some evidence that prosocial motivation further impacted subordinate voice behaviors, whereas psychological capital had positive effects on both subordinate voice and subordinate servant leadership. The moderated mediation hypotheses involving the gender of the leader were not supported, but the proposed interaction did serve to predict all three outcomes in a direct manner, such that servant leadership exhibited main effects on voice, performance, and employee servant leadership when the manager was female. The two moderators therefore operated in conjunction with servant leadership in strikingly different manners: manager sex moderated *direct* effects of servant leadership, whereas subordinate gender role schema moderated the *indirect*, transformative impact of servant leadership.

Overall, these results support servant leadership's usefulness in the modern organizational context, as well as the social learning approach to servant leadership, predictions of gender role

congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002), Greenleaf's (1970) original proposal of servant leadership's contagious nature, and the influence processes outlined in this dissertation. The temporally lagged nature of this study is worthy of note, in that nearly all major servant leadership research to date (Ehrhart, 2004; Hu & Liden, 2011; Hunter et al., 2013; Liden et al., 2014b; Liden et al., 2008; Schaubroeck et al., 2011; van Dierendonck et al., 2013) has been cross-sectional (see Walumbwa et al., 2010, for an exception), providing additional evidence for servant leadership's effectiveness. As one of the first studies to investigate moderating boundary conditions of servant leadership, as well as the first to test new mediators (prosocial motivation and PsyCap) and outcomes (voice and subordinate servant leadership), this research builds our understanding of why, how, and when servant leadership works, in accordance with the basic guidelines of conceptual understanding and theory (Whetten, 1989).

In the sections that follow, I discuss this study's theoretical and practical implications, as well as its strengths, limitations, and suggested avenues for further research.

## **6.2 Implications**

### **6.2.1 Theoretical implications and future research directions**

One important contribution of this study is the proposal of a new conceptual definition of servant leadership itself, as the construct has gone mostly undefined in both academic journals and practitioner books and magazines. Even when servant leadership is defined in research or practice, it is usually explained as either "a style of leadership which...", leaving its true meaning somewhat vague, or it is defined by its outcomes, as is the case with Greenleaf's popular definition of servant leadership as creating others who are "healthier, wiser, freer", etc. (Greenleaf, 1970). By proposing servant leadership as influence behaviors, manifested humbly and ethically within relationships and oriented toward follower development, empowerment, and continuous and meaningful improvement for all stakeholders, I hope to contribute to ongoing debates as to what leadership in general, and servant leadership specifically, represent. This proposed definition of servant leadership is not the first proposed by scholars, and I hold no illusions that it

will be the last. However, even if this definition is not accepted by the general servant leadership community, it is my hope that its introduction will at least catalyze a discussion that has so far been lacking: beyond the *operational* definition, what exactly does servant leadership mean? Given the community's progress in studying servant leadership, it seems somewhat backward that this discussion has not yet taken place; indeed, agreement on conceptual definition of a construct is a necessary precondition to strong and testable theory regarding that construct (Hempel, 1965).

The definition of servant leadership proposed here does have several meaningful advantages for leadership researchers, including its similarity with scholars' ideas of what leadership *should* be and how it should be studied (Nohria & Khurana, 2010; Podolny et al., 2010; Yukl, 2010) and its alignment with Robert Greenleaf's own ideas of how servant leadership should be understood (Greenleaf, 1970, 1996a). As weaknesses are noted in the current dominant and fully task-focused approaches to leadership in research (Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013; Yukl, 1999) and as those approaches come to be viewed as inadequate for ensuring organizational survival in the modern context (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Graham, 1991; Nohria & Khurana, 2010), it is important that management scholars identify a theoretically sound, effective, and sustainable leadership theory. Although servant leadership is not yet that ideal theory, it is my hope that this paper helps to develop such a theory and moves servant leadership down that road. Of the three most researched "positive" approaches to leadership in the literature, servant leadership stands alone in its conceptual and operational emphasis on organizational performance and sustainable stakeholder good. Neither authentic leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2008) nor ethical leadership (Brown et al., 2005) include performance orientations or behaviors in their conceptual and operational structures; servant leadership, on the other hand, may be a more holistic approach to the type of leadership needed for modern organizations to succeed (Liden et al., 2014a; Nohria & Khurana, 2010). In this way, attention by scholars to servant leadership, an approach introduced nearly five decades ago, may "close the leadership circle" by suggesting an

answer to our query of how to research and promote an effective, theoretical, and sustainable form of leadership.

Authentic leadership (Gardner, Cogliser, Davis, & Dickens, 2011; Walumbwa et al., 2008) focuses on the authenticity and transparency of the leader him or herself, with a limited behavioral focus, whereas ethical leadership (Brown & Treviño, 2006) employs a narrow focus on the leader's own ethical character, and his or her behavioral attempts to transmit those ethics to others in the organization. All three positive schools of leadership arguably rose to academic prominence following the ethical scandals of the early twenty-first century, due to perceived weaknesses in the ethically neutral transformation paradigm and the rise of the positive organizational scholarship literature (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Cameron et al., 2003). Although they are sometimes conceptually distinguished from one another in introductory papers, their differences (and differential predictive power) remain somewhat murky. Questions of when a researcher (or organization, for that matter) should consider servant leadership, as opposed to authentic or ethical leadership, may be difficult to answer. I believe that this cross-conceptual vagueness is a logical outcome of conceptual vagueness in the servant leadership construct itself, and I hope that renewed attention to its definition helps resolve these issues. It may be that servant leadership's emphases on stakeholders and their development is what sets it apart from these other schools of positive leadership, just as attention to the leader's own honesty and authenticity is somewhat unique to authentic leadership, and attention to the leader's explicit efforts to enforce and share ethical character are somewhat unique to the ethical approach. More theoretical and empirical work distinguishing these approaches should be fruitful.

Although this study is not the first to propose (Liden et al., 2014a; Russell & Stone, 2002) nor test (Liden et al., 2014b; Walumbwa et al., 2010) the social learning perspective to explain servant leadership's outcomes, I contribute to the literature by producing evidence for its usefulness in studying servant leadership and empirically demonstrating new avenues by which it may operate. Indeed, given the explicit importance of role modeling and subordinate development

in early servant leadership theorizing (Graham, 1991; Greenleaf, 1977; Liden et al., 2008), it is surprising that more servant leadership research has not examined it from a social learning angle. Mechanisms such as trust and reciprocity are commonly cited in leadership research (Dirks, 2000; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), and undoubtedly play a role in servant leadership processes, but do not speak to the fundamental transformation of individuals' motives and abilities suggested by servant leadership theory. It is feasible that such servant leadership development takes place over significant periods of time (Bandura, 1977b), so mechanisms such as trust and social exchange may serve as initial or parallel processes by which servant leaders impact outcomes. Evidence exists for many mechanisms of servant leadership's effectiveness, and this research supports the role of social learning, rather than providing any evidence against other mechanisms. Although I planned to control for trust in my analyses, extreme collinearity between trust and servant leadership rendered this infeasible. Future studies should consider modeling relationships which contain multiple mechanisms simultaneously, so as to better understand how these mechanisms might work together, vary sequentially, or even interact with one another.

To my knowledge, this is the first empirical test of prosocial motivation and positive psychological capital as mediators of servant leadership, although both have been theorized as likely mechanisms of servant and general positive leadership (e.g. Liden et al., 2008; Luthans et al., 2007a). Results here do support the contingent theory of servant leadership presented in this dissertation, although with some meaningful caveats. For instance, this study's results support contingent links from servant leadership to prosocial motivation and psychological capital, supporting the social learning approach, but both mediators were curiously unrelated to in-role performance in my analyses (servant leadership was itself directly related to in-role performance, moderated by leader gender, as will be discussed below). Both mediators have been linked to various types of performance in previous empirical scholarship (Grant, 2008; Korsgaard et al., 1997; Luthans et al., 2007a), suggesting that the lack of a result here may have been driven by the sample. There is some evidence that the nature of Organization 1 (which was the largest in my



multi-organizational sample) may have played a role; prior to data collection, I conducted several qualitative interviews at this large profit-focused financial transactions company. Compared to similar interviews I have conducted with other organizations, the salience of citizenship seemed somewhat low; both employees and managers commented on how organizational and community citizenship (both conceptually aligned with prosocial motivation and psychological capital) had never historically been seen as very important within the company. If these interviews are generalizable to the company as a whole, this might help to explain the lack of relationship between the mediators and in-role performance. Replication of this study in different types of organizational environments is necessary before any strong conclusions regarding these mediators can be reached.

The relationships of the mediators to the other two outcomes of voice and employee servant leadership behaviors were somewhat stronger. Both are new outcomes of servant leadership untested in previous literature, although voice has been described as a mechanism by which servant leadership might grow procedural justice climates (Walumbwa et al., 2010) and employee enactment of servant leadership is arguably the primary, fundamental outcome of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977, 1996a; Liden et al., 2014a), albeit previously untested. With this in mind, the results of this study are quite encouraging, answering several calls from leadership scholars (Liden et al., 2008; Spears, 2002; van Dierendonck, 2011). This research serves as the first scholarship to empirically test and verify the assertion at the heart of servant leadership that those led by servant leaders become wiser, freer, and more likely to become servant leadership themselves (Greenleaf, 1970). This is an important development in this field, in that it speaks to the long-term sustainability of the servant-as-leader approach, provides support for the theoretical and conceptual roots of the construct, and opens promising new lines of research inquiry as to how servant leadership aligns with leader development.

One question left unanswered by this research is how such leader development processes may play out over time, and whether other leadership competencies are developed alongside

servant leadership (Dragoni, Tesluk, Russell, & Oh, 2009). Additionally, if the followers of servant leaders become servant leaders themselves, what then do leadership networks look like? As empowerment is a fundamental operational element of servant leadership (Ehrhart, 2004; Liden et al., 2008) and as servant leaders are by nature willing to share power, these results suggest the emergence of shared leadership team processes (D’Innocenzo, Mathieu, & Kukenberger, 2014) within groups led by servant leaders. Consistent with theories of adaptive leadership (DeRue, 2011) and followership (Uhl-Bien et al., 2013), leader role influence can then emerge throughout organizations and teams, which should have meaningful implications for processes and performance. Over time, do additional positive effects on performance and other outcome variables appear as leadership emerges from multiple sources? If the hierarchical manager grants leader identities to others on her team who had become servant leaders, what impact would this have on the outcomes and processes of leadership?

Another major contribution of this study is the integration of gender role congruity theory with the servant leadership approach to identify a female leadership advantage. Sex is often considered one of the most salient factors determining leadership emergence (Kent & Moss, 1994; Schein, 1973), with men nearly universally more likely to emerge as leaders due to implicit "think leader, think male" masculine leader stereotypes (Bem, 1981b; Eagly et al., 1992; Schein, 1973). As leadership has traditionally been seen as dominant, independent, aggressive, forceful, and otherwise typically masculine (Eagly & Karau, 2002), female leaders have struggled with cognitive dissonance in their implementation of leader behaviors, despite the equivalent quality of those behaviors (Morrison et al., 1987). As part of their gender role congruity theory, Eagly and Karau (2002) specifically raised the possibility that women might hold advantages for any less masculine forms of leadership, forms more communal in nature, although they called any such approaches "rare". Over a decade later, this study supports their prediction: although not exclusively communal and feminine, servant leadership is certainly more balanced than most

traditional forms of leadership, providing a model by which female and communal gender stereotypes are more closely aligned.

It is worth noting that the sex of the servant leader did not, however, impact the developing effects of servant leadership on subordinate prosocial motivation and positive psychological capital; rather, female servant leaders were able to directly impact the outcomes of voice, performance, and employee servant leadership, whereas male servant leaders in this sample were less able to do so directly. This does not mean that men are unsuited to servant leadership, any more than classical leadership research results have meant that females were unsuited to leadership; rather, it seems that females may have a distinct advantage when using the servant leadership approach due to implicit leader and gender stereotypes (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Although the slopes from servant leadership behaviors to the outcomes were insignificant for male managers, male managers had no such disadvantages when their leadership influence worked its way through the mediators of prosocial motivation and psychological capital. This is itself an interesting result worthy of consideration and eventual replication, and suggests several follow-up questions: are females then able to more quickly impact organizational outcomes through servant leadership than males? Would females have a natural advantage in using servant leadership to build trust (Hu & Liden, 2011; Schaubroeck et al., 2011) and service climates (Hunter et al., 2013; Liden et al., 2014b), other empirically supported mediators of servant leadership? Might there be an interaction between leader and follower genders in determining the effectiveness of developing the servant leadership of the follower? All of these are promising research questions.

Social learning theory itself provides an interesting counter-argument which may help to explain the lack of a moderated mediation for leader gender. Specifically, social learning processes become stronger and more effective as behaviors are perceived as more unexpected and unique (Pyszczynski & Greenberg, 1981). With this in mind, it is possible that a *male* servant leader would actually make for a stronger social learning model, as a male servant leader

engaging in more feminine and communal activities such as "emotional healing" and relationship building (Liden et al., 2008) might be seen as more unexpected than if those same behaviors emerged from a female manager. Thus, although role congruity theory supports the female manager as having the servant leadership advantage, social learning theory provides evidence for the male manager. This conflict is captured in the results of this study, such that females do have the advantage for direct effects of servant leadership, but the advantage is neutralized for the social-learning-dependent paths to prosocial motivation and psychological capital.

Whereas the gender of the leader moderated the direct link from servant leadership behaviors to the distal outcomes, the female gender role schema of the follower moderated the link from servant leadership to the mediators of prosocial motivation and positive psychological capital. This suggests that gender schema may be a boundary condition of servant leadership unique to its social learning effects, but possibly absent from its effects through trust and service climate. As hypothesized, the effects of servant leadership on mediating subordinate characteristics were strongest when subordinates had higher female gender schemas, consistent with theories of person-supervisor fit (Kristof - Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005), gender congruity (Eagly & Karau, 2002), and similarity attraction (Byrne, 1971). For the proposed social learning processes to take place, employees seemed to need some level of comfort with the more feminine and communal aspects of servant leadership (Bandura, 1977b). As gender role did not moderate direct effects of servant leadership on outcomes, this suggests a question of how subordinates low in female gender schema might be affected by servant leadership initially. Will they come to trust a supervisor over time, sufficient to 'break through' their low female gender schema, or might team processes within a strong servant climate have the same effect? Does the theoretically orthogonal masculine gender schema play a role? Of these, the first question seems especially interesting, and also raises the issue of whether gender schema might itself be changed

by exposure to servant leadership, as an individual's gender schema may be somewhat flexible (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Altogether, these results provide strong support for the theory of servant leadership presented here, indicating the salience of social learning, the critical moderating roles of leader gender and follower gender schema, and servant leadership's impacts on prosocial motivation, positive psychological capital, performance, voice, and the development of servant leadership behaviors in others. As servant leadership continues to grow in popularity and prevalence, this research will hopefully provide a base framework for future questions regarding its efficacies and effects. Although the model tested provides meaningful support for the servant leadership theory developed here and by other scholars (Greenleaf, 1977; Liden et al., 2014a), several other mediators and outcomes remain untested. For instance, values, defined as the "guideposts" that provide meaning to experiences and help individuals determine toward what ends to guide their behaviors (George & Jones, 1996; Lewin, 1951; Perrewé & Hochwarter, 2001) are distinct from motivation (Parks & Guay, 2009) and may also grow through exposure to servant leadership, and relate from there to organizational and personal outcomes. Community citizenship (Liden et al., 2008), untested in this research, also seems a critical component of servant leadership theory: if individuals truly are becoming more servant-like and concerned about the improvement of communities and society, would they not become more active in their citizenship outside of work? Additionally, would these relationships hold while controlling for other styles of leadership, from the predominant transformational approach to the more closely related ethical leadership style?

Perhaps the two most important conclusions from this study involve the outcome of employee servant leadership behaviors, and the moderations by gender constructs. In the case of the former, this research is the first to empirically demonstrate that servant leadership does indeed create servant leaders, just as Greenleaf (1970) originally proposed, and just as servant leadership theorists have been predicting ever since (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Liden et al., 2008; van

Dierendonck, 2011). This is a very promising development for servant leadership scholarship, "closing the research circle" by returning to the very first outcome ever proposed for servant leadership, and the one Greenleaf suggested as most important. Academically, this finding suggests the potential for integration with other theories of distributed leadership and many new promising areas of research inquiry. In the case of the latter, I conclude that females have a distinct advantage in implementing servant leadership, as opposed to males or other leader approaches, providing a method by which longstanding male implicit leadership prototypes (Lord et al., 1984; Schein, 1973) might be offset. Replication is certainly needed, but this suggests that just as society is changing to become more accepting of female leaders (Davidson & Burke, 2012), leadership itself may be changing to become more gender-neutral (Eagly & Karau, 2002), making opportunities more accessible to all.

### **6.2.2 Practical implications**

These results provide practical guidance for organizations hoping to install people-oriented, moral, and stakeholder-driven models of leadership within their management teams. First and foremost, this study adds to a growing body of evidence that servant leadership, despite its lack of primary and proximal focus on goals, mission, and profits, nonetheless has meaningful positive effects on goals, mission, and profits (Liden et al., 2014b; Peterson et al., 2012; Schaubroeck et al., 2011). Beyond these results, however, this research also suggests several other outcomes of potential interest to organizations. Servant leadership can grow employee prosocial motivation, which may in turn lead to organizational citizenship and proactivity (Grant, 2008; Rioux & Penner, 2001), and positive psychological capital, which raises employee commitment, performance, well-being, and safety (Newman, Ucbasaran, Zhu, & Hirst, 2014). The employee voice outcome of servant leadership may be valuable to organizations for its positive impacts on decision quality, learning and development, and employee job satisfaction (Morrison, 2011). And if servant leaders truly are capable of creating more servant leaders from

their employees, the other benefits mentioned here improve exponentially, not even mentioning resources saved that would be used in leader development and succession planning efforts.

A writer with the Harvard Business School press recently asked the question, "Why aren't there more servant leaders?" (Heskett, 2013). If servant leadership is such a good thing for organizations and businesses, he asked, and if so many people write so much about it, why isn't it more prevalent? These results may provide a partial answer to this quandary. As this study suggests that servant leadership may be more difficult in the short-term for male managers to successfully enact (due to male managers needing to work through the social learning mediators), and given the very small percentage of female executives in modern organizations (Gayle, Golan, & Miller, 2012), it is feasible that male members of top management teams might attempt servant leadership, initially struggle with it, and give up on it before its developmental effects have a chance to take shape. As both positive and negative leadership behaviors tend to transmit through organizations from the top in a "trickle-down" manner (Aryee, Chen, Sun, & Debrah, 2007; Mayer et al., 2009), this could explain the absence of more dominant servant leadership frameworks in modern organizations. This study provides evidence that male managers may initially struggle with some aspects of servant leadership, but also suggests that the difference between male and female managers may fade in the long-term, as servant leadership effects route through prosocial motivation and positive psychological capital.

Servant leadership is not a "quick" solution, and it may not be one that many managers are suited for; although research on antecedents of servant leadership is somewhat minimal, Greenleaf suggested that only a very special kind of "servant," with genuine concern for others, was truly suited to become a servant leader. On the other hand, narcissism may be somewhat prevalent in the upper echelons of organizations (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007; Gerstner, König, Enders, & Hambrick, 2013) where trickle-down leadership would need to start, representing another barrier to servant leadership in organizations. It is likely that some managers, at both high and low levels, have 'faked' servant leadership behaviors at some point, perhaps after attending a

training, reading a book or magazine article, or hearing about it from others. These leaders may experience cognitive dissonance if their own motives are not so other-centric as their servant leadership behaviors might indicate (Maio, Cheung, Pakizeh, & Rees, 2009; Rokeach, 1973). On the other hand, though, as Kurt Vonnegut wrote in *Mother Night*, "We are what we pretend to be," and we become what we pretend to be, an idea that has been supported in psychological research (Galinsky, Wang, & Ku, 2008). Such behaviors can become habitual over time, by simple virtue of repetition and priming (Aarts & Dijksterhuis, 2000; Neal, Wood, Labrecque, & Lally, 2012). Again, this points to the same practical advice as the previous paragraph: organizational management must give adequate time for servant leadership to work its effects on individual outcomes. It may not operate especially quickly, particularly in organizations which are predominantly viewed by their employees as masculine (such as heavy industry or transportation, perhaps).

Female managers may find the most useful practical implications in this study, as my results suggest that servant leadership is an ideal leadership style for women to use in order to minimize and even invert the usually negative effects of masculine leadership stereotypes and associated cognitive dissonance. Due to its nature as being more communally oriented than traditional styles of leadership, this study demonstrates that women may be more effective as servant leaders than men. These findings suggest that modern organizations, especially those in more female-dominated and communal industries, should consider training new managers on servant leadership practices, rather than the more common and predominant transformational and transactional approaches. Although there is certainly not a one-size-fits-all solution to leadership, even for a gender group, women who in the past have struggled to match more masculine and agentic approaches and expectations of leadership (Eagly & Karau, 2002) may find servant leadership a more palatable and effective approach. The gender schema findings also suggest the usefulness of servant leadership particularly in such communal industries characterized by helping and service, such as healthcare and education.



### 6.2.3 Limitations

Although this study has many strengths such as its temporally lagged nature, multi-organizational framework, and detailed analysis of multi-level moderated mediation, it is not without its limitations. The first of these may be the sample size - although this study featured a multi-organizational sample spanning a variety of industries, the actual sample size of participants was somewhat small (122). Additionally, although employee and manager participation was quite high in two of the three organizations sampled, the response rate was somewhat lower in the largest organization (46% for employees; 51% for managers). Two factors, however, may minimize concerns regarding response rates and sample size. First, the multi-level power analysis conducted *a priori* indicated that this sample size was more than sufficient to identify effects of moderate size in all relationships. Second, missing data analyses confirmed that the data missing from that organization was missing at random, in that the demographics of the sample were not significantly different from those of the organization, and no study variables were related to whether a particular case was missing or not. Together, this data bolsters the validity of the sample and the generalizability of these results.

A second limitation was also related to the sample size, in that each moderated mediation was tested piecemeal, rather than all at once. A preferred approach might be to test all mediations, moderations, and outcomes simultaneously, likely in a multi-level structural equation modeling (MSEM) framework (Preacher et al., 2010). Unfortunately, the sample size in this study was not appropriate for this type of approach. The relatively low correlations among most study variables, however, and the robustness of the results given the small sample size and the variance decomposition framework used, lend confidence to the results of the hypothesis testing.

Third, more control variables might be ideal to test these relationships and rule out alternative explanations for the effects recorded. Although "blind" inclusion of control variables is not recommended in organizational research and some scholars have argued that management research controls overmuch and risks skewing true effects (Spector & Brannick, 2011), the use of

carefully chosen controls can be useful to isolate alternate effects and explanations. Subordinate trust in leaders was meant to be a control to help rule out an alternative explanation for servant leadership's effects, for instance, but was revealed to be far too highly correlated with other variables to be a useful control. Survey length restrictions from the organizations which took part in the study precluded the inclusion of other leadership scales and additional mechanism controls. Ideally, with a larger sample with greater tolerance for survey length, tests would be conducted to determine whether these effects are truly unique to servant leadership, and how they are affected by the measurement of other leadership behaviors (such as authentic or ethical leadership).

Although this study was temporally lagged, this was not sufficient to determine causality nor rule out reciprocal effects. Whereas these results provide some evidence, for instance, that servant leadership behaviors can grow positive psychological capital or voice behaviors in others, it is also feasible that the causal arrow works in the opposite direction. That is, managers might be spurred to the relationship-building and empowerment of servant leadership through their employees' high PsyCap and voice, or servant leaders might purposely select employees already high in these constructs. This study was temporally lagged in that manager-ratings of outcomes were rated after employee-ratings of leadership, and such that mediators were measured after outcomes (in two out of three organizations), but as these were neither exclusively new employees nor new employee-manager relationships, a strict causal order cannot be empirically verified. Future research might use qualitative or experience sampling methods to unpack these relationships, or examine new manager-employee teams to determine exactly how these process develop and play out initially, and over time.

Finally, to build and test a truly complete theory of servant leadership, antecedents of servant leadership would need to be theorized and tested as well. Little is currently known about the factors which drive individuals to engage in servant leadership (Hunter et al., 2013), although this study provides some evidence for antecedents in its finding of significant relationships among positive psychological capital, experienced servant leadership, and displayed servant

leadership. Given my interest in the outcomes, processes, and boundary conditions of servant leadership, antecedents were not included in this study. Future research should expand the theory of servant leadership started here and in other work (Greenleaf, 1977; Liden et al., 2014a; van Dierendonck, 2011) by specifically examining its antecedents.

#### **6.2.4 Conclusion**

Nearly fifty years ago, Robert Greenleaf conceptualized servant leadership as a force for both organizational and societal good, which would, in his words, help grow others into individuals who were "healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants" (Greenleaf, 1970). This research supports this proposition, finding evidence that servant leadership may in fact alter individuals to become healthier through positive psychological capital, wiser with prosocial motivation, freer and more autonomous with their expression of voice behaviors, and, finally, more likely themselves to become servant leaders. This final finding, closing and completing a circle of servant leadership, may be very encouraging for scholars and organizations. As servant leadership also boosts job performance, this style of leadership emerges as a holistic theory of effective management, boosting performance while providing a range of positive and ethical outcomes, in many ways an excellent match for the type of theoretically supported positive leadership which scholars and practitioners alike have been seeking for years (Graham, 1982; Hackman, 2010; Nohria & Khurana, 2010). Beyond answering calls for this type of sustainable leadership for a modern world, servant leadership also provides an intriguing answer for women who have struggled with traditionally male prototypes of leadership, potentially turning the "think leader, think male" prototype on its head and giving females an implicit advantage in their employee management. Altogether, the contingent theory of servant leadership is supported, suggesting the usefulness of a new approach (or perhaps, more accurately, the relevance of an old one) for modern organizational and personal success.

## APPENDIX A

### Detailed description of measurement

**Table 6: Measure length, time of collection, and data source**

<u>Construct</u>	<u>Citation</u>	<u># of items</u>	<u>Collection wave</u>	<u>Data source</u>
Servant Leadership (extant scales)	Liden et al., 2008; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 210	28 / 37	1 & 3	Employees (manager-referent at T1) Managers (employee-referent at T3)
Prosocial motivation	Grant & Sumanth, 2009	5	1 & 2	Employees
Positive Psychological Capital	Luthans et al., 2007; Avey et al., 2011a	12	1 & 2	Employees
Voice behaviors	Van Dyne & Lepine, 1998	6	3	Managers (employee-referent)
In-role performance	Williams & Anderson, 1991	7	1 & 3	Managers (employee-referent)
Gender role schema	Bem, 1981a	20	1	Employees
Trust	McAllister, 1995; Schaubroeck et al., 2011	6	1	Employees

## APPENDIX B

### Measure items

#### **Servant leadership scale (Liden et al., 2008)**

##### Conceptual Skills

My manager can tell if something is going wrong.  
My manager is able to effectively think through complex problems.  
My manager has a thorough understanding of our organization and its goals.  
My manager can solve work problems with new or creative ideas.

##### Empowerment

My manager gives me the responsibility to make important decisions about my job.  
My manager encourages me to handle important work decisions on my own.  
My manager gives me the freedom to handle difficult situations in the way that I feel is best.  
When I have to make an important decision at work, I do not have to consult my manager first.

##### Helping subordinates grow and succeed

My manager makes my career development a priority.  
My manager is interested in making sure that I achieve my career goals.  
My manager provides me with work experiences that enable me to develop new skills.  
My manager wants to know about my career goals.

##### Putting subordinates first

My manager seems to care more about my success than his/her own.  
My manager puts my best interests ahead of his/her own.  
My manager sacrifices his/her own interests to meet my needs.  
My manager does what she/he can do to make my job easier.

##### Behaving ethically

My manager holds high ethical standards.  
My manager is always honest.  
My manager would not compromise ethical principles in order to achieve success.  
My manager values honesty more than profits.

##### Emotional healing

I would seek help from my manager if I had a personal problem.  
My manager cares about my personal well-being.  
My manager takes time to talk to me on a personal level.  
My manager can recognize when I'm down without asking me.

##### Creating value for the community

My manager emphasizes the importance of giving back to the community.  
My manager is always interested in helping people in our community.  
My manager is involved in community activities.  
I am encouraged by my manager to volunteer in the community

#### **Additional servant leadership items (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2010)**

##### Accountability:

My manager holds me responsible for the work I carry out.  
I am held accountable for my performance by my manager.  
My manager holds me and my colleagues responsible for the way we handle a job.

##### Courage:

My manager takes risks even when he/she is not certain of the support from his/her own manager.  
My manager takes risks and does what needs to be done in his/her view.

### Stewardship:

My manager emphasizes the importance of focusing on the good of the whole.

My manager has a long-term vision.

My manager emphasizes the societal responsibility of our work.

### **Prosocial motivation (Grant & Sumanth, 2009)**

I like to work on tasks that have the potential to benefit others.

I do my best when I'm working on a task that contributes to the well-being of others.

I prefer to work on tasks that allow me to have a positive impact on others.

It is important to me to have the opportunity to use my abilities to benefit others.

I get energized by working on tasks that have the potential to benefit others.

### **Positive Psychological Capital (Luthans et al., 2007; Avey et al., 2011a)**

#### Efficacy

I feel confident in representing my work area in meetings with management.

I feel confident contributing to discussions about the organization's strategy.

I feel confident presenting information to a group of colleagues.

#### Hope

If I should find myself in a jam at work, I could think of many ways to get out of it.

Right now I see myself as being pretty successful at work.

I can think of many ways to reach my current work goals.

At this time, I am meeting the work goals that I have set for myself.

#### Resilience

I can be "on my own," so to speak, at work if I have to.

I usually take stressful things at work in stride.

I can get through difficult times at work because I've experienced difficulty before.

#### Optimism

I always look on the bright side of things regarding my job.

I'm optimistic about what will happen to me in the future as it pertains to work.

### **Voice behaviors (Van Dyne & LePine, 1988)**

This employee develops and makes recommendations concerning issues that affect this work group.

This employee communicates his/her opinions about work issues to others in this group even if his/her opinion is different and others in the group disagree with him/her.

This employee keeps well informed about issues where his/her opinion might be useful to this work group.

This employee gets involved in issues that affect the quality of work life here in this group.

This employee speaks up and encourages others in this group to get involved in issues that affect the group.

This employee speaks up in this group with ideas for new projects or changes in procedures.

### **In-role performance (Williams & Anderson, 1991)**

This employee adequately completes assigned duties.

This employee fulfills responsibilities specified in the job description.

This employee performs tasks that are expected of him/her.

This employee meets formal performance requirements of the job.

This employee engages in activities that will directly affect his/her performance evaluation.

This employee neglects aspects of the job he/she is obligated to perform. (R)

This employee fails to perform essential duties. (R)

**Gender role schema (Bem, 1981a)**

Aggressive (M)  
Compassionate (F)  
Forceful (M)  
Sympathetic (F)  
Strong personality (M)  
Sensitive to others' needs (F)  
Dominant (M)  
Gentle (F)  
Self-sufficient (M)  
Love children (F)  
Assertive (M)  
Eager to soothe feelings (F)  
Independent (M)  
Affectionate (F)  
Defend my own beliefs (M)  
Tender (F)  
Willing to take a stand (M)  
Warm (F)  
Willing to take risks (M)  
Understanding (F)

**Trust (McAllister, 1995; Schaubroeck et al., 2011)**

If my manager was transferred and we could no longer work together, we would both feel a sense of loss.

I can talk freely to my manager about difficulties I am having at work and know that (s)he will want to listen.

We have a sharing relationship. We can both freely share our ideas, feelings, and hopes.

Given my team leader's track record, I see no reason to doubt his/her competence and preparation for the job.

My manager approaches his/her job with professionalism and dedication.

I can rely on my manager not to make my job more difficult by careless work.

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