

## **Radical Servant Leadership: A New Practice of Public Education Leadership in the Post-Industrial Age**

*Angelo Letizia, The College of William & Mary, Virginia, USA*

*Both secondary and postsecondary public education may offer one the last spaces for true democratic dialogue untainted by the market (Giroux, 2011). Public education however is under attack by “reformers” who seek to privatize it and transform it into a market good (Klein, 2007). Due to this, public education needs leaders who will fight for it. This paper calls for a new type of leader, a radical servant leader. Radical servant leadership derives from Servant Leadership (Greenleaf, 2002). A servant leader leads by serving, by making the wellbeing of his or her follower’s first priority. Radical servant leaders must make not only the welfare but the justice of his or her followers their number one priority. These leaders however will be in a unique situation. As public servants their goal will always be to serve the public good. They can accomplish this by utilizing the vast amount of information available in post-industrial society. They must mobilize this information and use it to bring a new dialectical period in human history.*

It is no secret that public education institutions are under attack. This attack stems from a variety of reasons; education institutions are cast as overly bureaucratic, teachers are seen as ineffective, professors are seen as overpaid, tuition is skyrocketing and colleges are blamed, teacher unions are vilified (Fried & Salam, 2012; Klein, 2007; Vedder, 2004). These are some of the usual criticisms of both K-12 and higher education institutions. Many theorists have examined these attacks, but this paper examines the attack on public education institutions in a slightly different context.

The current attack on public education has also ensued during the emergence of the information age (Bell, 1999; Drucker, 2002). The information age is characterized by the production and proliferation of many types of information including information related to the military, medical advances, new technologies, the economy, politics, engineering and computers to name a few (Bell, 1999; Marginson, 2011). Educational institutions are vital in the information age because they

produce a variety of information which is essential to modern society. Most importantly however, public education may offer one of the last spaces for true democratic thought and dialogue untainted by the market in the information age (Giroux, 2011; Marginson, 2011). But this democratic potential is under attack. Since public education is under attack, public entities need leaders who will fight for it. These leaders however will be in a unique situation. As public servants, teachers and professors main task will always be to serve the public good. Yet at the same time these leaders must be vigilant and wage a counterattack against market advocates who seek to undermine public education and its space for democracy. Educators must use praxis to fight for their cause and be servants to the public good.

This unique situation calls for a new type of leadership; *radical servant leadership*. A radical servant leader will use his or her power and position to fight for teachers, faculty and really public education in general. Radical servant leadership derives from servant leadership. A servant leader leads by serving, by putting the welfare and wellbeing of his or her followers above his or her own interests (Greenleaf, 2002; Northouse, 2013). Radical servant leaders must make not only the welfare of followers but the justice of followers the number one priority. This can be accomplished by mobilizing and re-interpreting the vast amount of information in the information age.

The mobilization of information in the information age is a complex task however. The information age has vast potential for liberation, yet it currently is dominated by neoliberalism (Suoranta & Vaden, 2007). It is my contention that public education can be a revolutionary space of resistance in the information age. More than this, public education, led by radical servant leaders, may be able to usher in a new phase of human history. In this new phase, information and knowledge would be used for the benefit of mankind, not profit. Ultimately, the radical servant leader can ignite a dialectical change to supersede post-industrial society.

The first section of the paper discusses the emergence of post-industrial society and its intersection with neoliberalism. The second section

defines servant leadership and elaborates on the notion of radical servant leadership. The next section examines the role of a radical servant leader in the context of post-industrial society. It describes tasks that radical servant leaders can undertake in order to bring about dialectical change from post-industrial society based on neoliberalism to a new stage of human history.

## **Post-Industrial Society and Neoliberalism**

The rapid advances in computer technology and logistics helped to fuel what became known as the information revolution by the mid-sixties in many countries around the world (Bell, 1999). By mid-century in many of the industrialized nations in the world, there was a change from the production of goods to information and services. This shift from industrial organization was termed “post-industrial” (Bell, 1999). Post-Industrial Society is based on a few key tenets. The occupational distribution gave way from factory workers to knowledge workers and to a professional and technical class (Bell, 1999). While building weapons and cars was and still is important, it was the creation of information, from advances in computer sciences, logistics and optics to name a few areas which become essential.

The axial principal of post-industrial society is theoretical knowledge (Bell, 1999; Stiglitz, 1999; Sy, 1999). Yet, acquisition and accessibility of knowledge in the post-industrial age is threatened by neoliberalism. In theory, knowledge is inherently non-hierarchical because theoretically it can be acquired by anyone (Drucker, 2002). Currently however, the acquisition of knowledge is restricted. Some ways in which knowledge restriction occur in the United States and other post-industrial nations will be briefly examined below.

Neoliberalism emerged during the late 1930s and early 1940s, as a way to combat the tenets of the Welfare state in Europe, the New Deal and later liberalism in the United States (Plant, 2010; Wolff, 2012). By the 1970s, neoliberal advocates gained prominence in the US and the UK as the global economy worsened. Public institutions, which the famed economist and neoliberal advocate Milton Friedman deemed the last vestiges of socialism, came under heavy attack (Freidman & Freidman,

1981). Since the 1980s, neoliberal policies in the United States and globally have accounted for a massive redistribution of wealth upward (Giroux, 2011; Hill, 2012; Newfield, 2008; Peet, 2009; Wolff, 2012). Income disparity has risen dramatically over the last thirty years. This has had a disastrous result on college accessibility for low-income, middle class and minority students (Levin, 2010; McSwain, 2007). Many students in these groups simply cannot afford to attend college. Coupled with this is the dramatic decrease in state funding for higher education, which has caused massive tuition hikes. Many policymakers view this reduction of funds as a way to discipline higher education and turn higher education into a market good (Rhoads & Torres, 2006; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Vestrinch, 2008). As a result of stagnant wages, rising tuition costs, rising cost of living and income gap disparity many students find themselves either unable to attend school or having to work over 20 hours a week while attending school. Working students are much more prone to dropping out and not obtaining a degree (Pusser, et. al, 2009). In addition, as institutions of higher education are restructured by neoliberalism, they have switched from need based aid to merit aid in an effort to attract brighter students (who already come from privileged backgrounds) to boost up their rankings. This allows the university to charge higher tuition (Duffy & Goldberg, 1998; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

This has affected secondary schools as well. As precious tax revenue disappears and is re-routed to charter schools, religious institutions, virtual schools and other for-profit ventures, the quality of education at already strapped public schools will deteriorate further. In affluent areas, this will be mitigated by raising taxes and donations, but in lower income areas, such as rural towns and the inner city, the loss of tax revenue will simply add to their plight (Fowler, 2009). What the changes in secondary and higher education amount to is that an increasing number of students are receiving lower quality public educations as well as facing the prospect of being unable to receive higher education. Bell argues that the new stratification of post-industrial society will be marked by those having knowledge and skills inhabiting the upper classes and those who do not inhabiting the lower classes (Bell, 1999). The allocation of funds

in both secondary and higher education is putting society on a path to this new class division.

Another way access to knowledge has been affected by neoliberalism is in higher education funding models (Newfield, 2009; Washburn, 2005). Engineering, applied sciences and business schools receive the lion share of university funding because they supposedly generate the most revenue and have the ability to produce profit (Newfield, 2009; Washburn, 2005). In actuality however, the research that these disciplines undertake cost far more than the revenue they produce. As a result, anywhere from half to two thirds of the revenue that the humanities generate from enrollment is diverted to the supposedly profitable disciplines (Newfield, 2009; Washburn, 2005). As Newfield argues, it is actually the humanities that subsidize the supposedly profitable disciplines (Newfield, 2009). Washburn argues that university administrators are all hoping that their profitable disciplines will yield profits in the form of patents and commercial revenues (Washburn, 2005). Yet this rarely happens. Most of the time this scientific gambling comes up short and the institution recoups its losses through the humanities enrollment funds (Newfield, 2009). Since the profitable disciplines have more money at their disposal, money that came from the humanities, they have greater sway and lobbying power with administrators and policymakers. In turn, the humanities continue to decline in prestige and funding, while the supposedly profitable disciplines prestige raise in the eyes of the public (Newfield, 2009). Of course Newfield points out there is no national data of funding patterns, but much of the literature supports that these funding patterns are pretty universal at large research universities. Liberal arts universities do place much more emphasis on the humanities, but these universities usually do not hold the power and prestige of the large research universities (Newfield, 2009). Funding and budgeting are not just money allocation patterns; they are priorities (Fowler, 2009). Budgets reveal the priorities of an institution; the aggregate of budgets gives a glimpse of the public's priorities. Information produced by the humanities, such as valuable cultural knowledge is demeaned, and the profitable disciplines are elevated at the expense of the humanities and other less profitable disciplines (Engell & Dangerfield, 1998).

Not only has access to knowledge been restricted as a result of neoliberalism, but the actual transmission of knowledge and what constitutes knowledge has been detrimentally affected as well. Since the internet went public in 1990, it has drastically restructured society and further brought us into the information age (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). The internet is a democratic space and individuals and groups have a right to internet space. The internet was first developed for use by scholars and for the military to share ideas and information (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). In 1990, the internet opened to the public, and by 1995, the internet became a legitimate and profitable tool of commerce (Drucker, 2002; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Yet the original intent of the internet was to share information free and publically for the benefit of humanity (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). And it does serve this purpose well. Sites such as Wikipedia offer uses free encyclopedic information, outlets such as National Public Radio on the web and other educational sites provide up to date current events and information (Suronata & Vaden, 2007). Rural areas from the United States to Pakistan utilize online learning to bring education to remote places (Spring, 2008). Further, many scholars are in the process of digitizing academic journals and placing them on online in an attempt to provide open and free access to other scholars and the general public. The Arab spring revolutions of 2011 were conducted mainly on twitter and facebook (Anderson, 2011). All of these examples show how the sharing and dissemination of information has been revolutionary and transformed by the internet, as well as the great potential it has to benefit humanity.

Yet the democratic and free nature of the internet is being challenged by corporations and other for-profit entities who are attempting to control internet time and space. As they usurp the democratic space of the internet, for-profit entities such as Google actual restructure the way in which individuals receive and process information. For instance, when individuals use Google to search for information, the information procured by the search engine is the result of complex algorithms. These algorithms are based on which entities pay to have their sites put up. In some ways we not informed by scientific research, but rather the algorithms of Google and other sites (Halpern, 2003). Information can

even be seen as a new type of currency. Social media sites such as facebook “sell” their users’ personal information to data-mining companies for fractions of a penny (which add up to millions in the aggregate). Companies will then buy this personal information and tailor specific advertisements to your supposed desires and needs which are calculated from algorithms.

Another disturbing trend is for-profit news media, especially on the air waves. Over the last 20 years, really beginning with the emergence of Rush Limbaugh, right wing radio programming has increased drastically (as has sports radio) pushing out more liberal programs (Collins, 2013). Right wing talk radio is labeled as “non-guested confrontation talk radio” (Collins, 2013). This format is not really conducive to enlightening discussions between bipartisan participants. Rather, what occurs is usually a two hour diatribe with little dialogue and reflection (Collins, 2013). This elimination of dialogue and the increased use of confrontational style can obscure true knowledge acquisition and can lead to one-sided partisan understandings.

With all this information available, citizens of the post-industrial age are prone to experience information overload (Fullan, 2001). There is simply too much information to process and understand by one individual or organization. A distinctive feature of the information age is the growth and expansion of various organizations in an attempt to make sense of this information. The growth of structures to decipher this information is also not a neutral phenomenon. Over the last thirty years, neoliberalism has obscured the way many individuals and organizations understand, classify or “pigeonhole” the ever increasing amount of information they are inundated with (Peet, 2009; Spring, 2008). Success is measured in simplistic terms and almost always seen in terms of profitability (Cohen & March, 1975; Prokou, 2013). This is evident in educational policy. Many education “reformers” funded by neoliberal and conservative entities argue that both higher education and secondary education: should produce trained workers for the global economy, should be assessed in the form of standardized tests and accountability measures and should be a revenue enhancer for the individual and the state (Alexander, 2000).

As noted earlier, Bell (1999), Drucker (2002) and Stiglitz (1999) have argued that the major class divisions in the information age will be between those with knowledge and those without. Yet, as illustrated above, this divide does not occur naturally; rather it is created and sustained by those in power and this mainly occurs in the developed countries that already control information (Stiglitz, 1999; Sy, 1999). The task for radical servant leaders will be to bridge this divide and fight to expand the accessibility and dissemination of underutilized knowledge to their followers.

The task above reflects the context of the information age. Humankind finds itself at a unique historical juncture. While military strength and industrial production remain important, it is information that gives power not just to traditional nation states, but increasingly to different populations and communities within those states (Kaldor, 2002; McGrew, 2002). Information by itself however is useless; information must be interpreted and put to uses by different social actors (Fullan, 2001). Neoliberalism currently dominates the creation, interpretation and control of information and as Foucault (1977) has argued, power precedes truth. Neoliberalism makes itself “true.” This truth is supported not with evidence and reason, but with power. Yet, radical servant leaders may be able to use information to challenge the “truth” of neoliberalism by mobilizing information in a more just way.

## **Servant Leadership and Radical Servant Leadership**

What is leadership? Leadership can be defined in a variety of ways, perhaps the safest definition is that leadership is a complex process having multiple dimensions (Northouse, 2013). The twentieth century saw an explosion of scholarship on leadership and produced many answers to the question of what is leadership. For the early part of the century, leadership was defined as centralization of power. By the 1930s, scholars began to emphasize specific traits of leaders. Later, scholars began to differentiate between guidance and coercion. By the 1950s and 1960s, scholars began to understand leadership as a behavior. Then, during the 1970s, there was more emphasis given to leaders as mobilizers of groups and organizations. Leaders were seen



as able to inspire and organizations to achieve certain goals (Northouse, 2013). As evidenced by the brief account above, the scholarship on leadership was becoming more complex and diversified. It was in 1970, during this time, that Robert Greenleaf first put forth the notion of servant leadership. In that year, Greenleaf published *The Servant as Leader* (Robert Greenleaf Biography, 2014). Servant leadership calls for leaders to put the welfare of their followers above all else (Barnabus, Anbarasu & Paul, 2010). Welfare in this sense means a person's physical and mental wellbeing. First and foremost, a servant leader must develop the potential of followers (Northouse, 2013). Servant leaders cultivate a shared vision for their followers and try their best to help each follower achieve this vision. Servant leadership, unlike many other leadership paradigms, is ethical because its central component is ethical action toward followers and society as a whole. Instead of autocratic or coercive leadership, servant leaders effectively communicate with their followers (Northouse, 2013). Most importantly, servant leaders actively solicit feedback from their followers and act upon that feedback. Other behaviors that are exhibited by effective servant leaders are empathy, the ability to heal the emotional tensions of their followers, social and emotional awareness, stewardship and a commitment to building community (Northouse, 2013).

Greenleaf had been a high level manager at AT&T for many years until he retired in the 1960s and put much of his theories into action. Yet it is questionable if servant leadership can truly work in the for-profit sector. How can one serve if the ultimate purpose of the organization is to make a profit? This questioned is all the more significant in current age of neo-liberal capitalism which, unlike Greenleaf's time, discards any notion of communal wellbeing for society and is centered solely on profit acquisition and control (Hill, 2012).

During the 1980s and continuing until the present, many more theories of leadership emerged, and older ones, such as trait and behavior approaches re-emerged and were modified. Since the 1970s, servant leadership has been an influential theory and it has been reframed and expanded. Leadership in education however is notoriously difficult to establish and define because education by its nature is not a discipline

in the strict sense due to the interdisciplinary nature of education (Andenero, 2013; Labree, 1998). This interdisciplinary nature however is not a liability, but rather, offers a tremendous opportunity to explore new areas of research and create new knowledge (Andenero, 2013; Berliner, 2002; Labree, 1998; Weiman, 2014). The theory of radical servant leadership is situated within this opportunity. Radical servant leadership is an evolution of servant leadership. Radical servant leaders must possess all the attributes of servant leaders. Yet they must possess other attributes as well. The key to radical servant leadership is for radical servant leaders not only make the welfare of their followers the number one priority, but to make *justice* regarding their followers, and society in general, the number one priority. This justice is rooted in the understanding of information and the challenging of the neoliberal constriction of information.

An anonymous reviewer of this manuscript noted that some of the descriptions of radical servant leadership are similar to fascism. The idea of a benevolent leader that knows the interests of the people better than the people themselves and was entrusted to lead could be interpreted as fascist. I am grateful for the reviewer bringing this point to my attention so I can give clarity. The notion of leadership in general is difficult to reconcile with critical theory because leadership is predicated on authority and critical theory is largely predicated on resisting authority structures (Marcuse, 1990). Radical servant leadership may be a way to frame leadership differently and allow leadership to be informed by critical theory. The entire purpose of a radical servant leader, as well as servant leaders, is to cultivate the potential in their follows in the hopes that at a certain point in time, the followers will be able to lead. Fascist leaders however, generally view their follows as subjects as children. Fascist leaders do not seek to develop the potential of their leaders, but only demand loyalty and obedience. Strict obedience is antipathy to radical servant leader leadership because the whole point of radical servant leaders is to empower more leaders, not create obedient subjects.

Most likely, radical servant leaders will not be hierarchal leaders with formal authority although they might be. Instead, radical servant leaders

will usually be emergent leaders. Emergent leaders are leaders without formal authority but that become well respected by their peers and able to lead them (Northouse, 2013). Common examples of emergent leaders in education are classroom teachers and college professors. While the formal power lies with principals and deans, emergent leaders draw on other sources of power, usually their knowledge of particular systems, events or institutions (Bohman & Deal, 2008; Northouse, 2013). The notion of emergent leadership is crucial to radical servant leadership. Most likely leaders at the top of the hierarchy of educational systems will have more vested interests in maintaining neoliberalism in education. Or they may feel passionately about education and the ill effects of neoliberalism but by virtue of their position they may not have much room to maneuver. Thus, emergent leaders can be quite vocal and have more flexibility to make their radical positions known.

A leader cannot exist without followers (Northouse, 2013). So who would follow a radical servant leader? This obviously depends on what position the servant leader occupies. Most likely a radical servant leader would be a teacher or professor. In that case, high school and college students would be the immediate followers. The needs and welfare of these students would be the leader's first priority. Each must be viewed as a citizen, a creative individual that has potential to contribute to the republic and it is the educator's task to cultivate this potential. In the widest sense, the radical servant leader must think ahead to all of his or her potential students and really all students in general. The radical servant leader would work to establish justice for these students, both in the present and in the future. The leader would also work to develop a sense of justice in these students so some of them could potentially become radical servant leaders and fight for their followers if they assume a position of leadership.

Of course, the radical servant leaders could have other followers outside of students; other colleagues, teachers and faculty at other institutions and possibly even hierarchal leaders who have more formal authority. Radical servant leaders must think of the welfare and justice of these followers as well, and he or she must look to enlighten them so they can be radical servant leaders. Radical servant leaders should work to

establish formal and informal networks through peer reviewed and invited publications, social media, scholarly conferences and colloquia. The hope is that if enough radical servant leaders emerge and touch enough followers, and those followers then continue the fight against neoliberalism, eventually the neo-liberal edifice will begin to weaken.

Who would want to become a radical servant leader? There are no bonuses or raises for occupying this position. There are no promotions or tenure appointments. (Although realistically, a radical servant leader will most likely still work for promotions and tenure appointments). But a radical servant leader will also work for different rewards and different goals. The main goal is that of societal transformation. The best way to achieve this is for scholars to use theory informed by action and action informed by theory, or praxis.

## **Praxis**

As global space constricts and boundaries melt, it becomes easier for exploitive entities to control this smaller space and the information in it (Mallot, 2012; Peet, 2009). Yet, there is also a pressure from the bottom up, where different groups and organizations can contest neoliberal globalization. Thus, within this compression of space and the proliferation of information in this compacted space sits a tremendous potential for either social advancement or stagnation (McGrew, 2002). Here is where a new type of leadership is crucial.

## **Radical servant leadership in theory.**

A radical servant leader must show his or followers that they are not only victims of detrimental policies but that they have the power to challenge those policies. This is part of the developmental process of servant leadership. If public employees and aspiring teachers and faculty members willingly accept neoliberal dictates they become complicit in their own marginalization. A radical servant leader must get his or her followers to resist this marginalization and become active in the fight. All members of public education must become critical. Educators must become active on their own behalf; they must show the general populace their worth. Social inequality needs a rational foundation (Horkheimer, 1974). Neoliberalism gives it this foundation. A radical

servant leader and his or her followers must work to destabilize this seemingly natural state of affairs. A long term goal of the radical servant leader is to inspire this sense a sense of justice in their followers. It is not enough to simply fight for followers. This implies they are helpless. Rather, a true radical servant leader must empower their followers.

The control of information in post-industrial society by neoliberals is the control and establishment of truth. In the words of Baudrillard, these truths can be likened to “floating signifiers.” They are signifiers which have no corresponding referents, they signify nothing. They become simulacra because they are images or representations that represent nothing. Baudrillard (1994) called the proliferation of simulacra, and where people base their knowledge and truth off of simulacra, a state of hyper-reality. In hyper-reality, signifiers no longer signify a truth. Accurate representation of referents is lost in hyper-reality (Baudrillard, 1993). As demonstrated earlier, neoliberalism constricts information. Using Baudrillard’s ideas, neoliberalism creates simulacra and “floating signifiers” which do not represent truth, only the interests of neoliberalism. A radical servant leader must use the vast amount of information available (which neoliberalism tries to constrict for this very reason) to *create* new and more just truths for his or her followers and fight the constriction of information by neoliberalism.

This new truth however must be a continual project (Rorty, 1996). Truth in the information age is a process of knowing, of digesting and understanding the almost infinite sources of data, research and scholarship. From all these sources, radical servant leaders can begin to create truth and disseminate this truth. Not a truth to be imposed in a fascist manner, but rather a truth to be created and recreated by the leader and the followers. This continual recreation and dissemination is praxis. This truth is how leaders and followers come to know the world and the processes that drive their complex realities. Truth is not waiting to be discovered, rather truth is an action, it is it is how people come to know, interpret and change their world. Perhaps the most potent form of praxis is dialectical.

While Hegel and Marx largely saw the dialectic movement of history largely out of the control of man or at least individuals, the Frankfurt School and then later critical pedagogues argue for a more agent driven dialectic movement. That is where radical servant leadership is situated, in this call for agency. Dialectical change calls for the negation or destruction of what is oppressive in a current state of affairs and the preserving of what is beneficial. After this simultaneous destruction and preservation, a new, more beneficial and rational state of affairs will emerge (Adorno, 1990; Marcuse, 1990). A dialectical understanding defies simple cause and effect reasoning (Adorno, 1973; Jay, 1996; Marcuse, 1990). Adorno (1973) argues that society is an evolving constellation of knowledge, ideas and disciplines. The Frankfurt School stressed the interconnectedness of academic disciplines and the holistic nature of reality and society (Adorno, 1973; Horkheimer, 1974; Jay, 1996). Later critical pedagogy scholars such as Kincheloe (2007) further highlighted how actions and events in contemporary society are driven by complex quagmires of social, historical, cultural, biological and psychological factors. This complexity must be made evident to students.

Specifically, what information could radical servant leaders utilize to illustrate this complexity? Academic journals in the arts, humanities and education abound with the complex and ever evolving information on morals, ethics and ideas pertaining to the human condition. This abundance of moral information presents an opportunity to create a space for a more just and humane knowledge to guide post-industrial society. In the widest sense, this information can help to expose faulty notions of simulacra that masquerade as truths in post-industrial society. It would also be foolish to simply ignore the market, the sciences and other purviews of neoliberalism. Rather these entities must be harnessed for the good of humanity and seen in the wider constellation of ethics and justice. The market does not have the capability of forging any constellation for the good of humanity; however, science has the ability to make the philosopher's goals a reality (Drucker, 2002; Marcuse, 1990). Through modern science, every man women and child on this planet could conceivably have enough to eat, given adequate health care and have their basic needs met (Marcuse, 1990; Peet, 2009). Yet

neoliberalism has rigged the distribution system. Only ones with money can afford these things (Giroux, 2011, Peet, 2009). Additionally, the market, science and engineering and other related notions are used not in the service of humanity but in the service of profit (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Washburn, 2005). For instance, many universities pursue the creation of cosmetics and other non-essentials over cures because these items are profitable (Rhoades & Torres, 2006; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Washburn, 2005). Radical servant leaders must bring this to the attention of other scholars, students and the public. The market is not just; justice must be brought to it.

Radical servant leaders must challenge simulacra and inspire followers to become dialectical. Here again is how radical servant leadership differs from almost any leadership paradigm. The focus is not to do what is best for followers, but rather, to turn leaders into followers, if they so choose. He or she must inspire people to fight for a new society based on truth by showing these people that they all have the capability to fight. Radical servant leaders are in the process of truth creation, but this new truth would not be incomplete, static or profit driven as it is in neoliberalism. Rather, it would be dialectical and just. Drucker noted that knowledge is the new means of production since it is knowledge and information that drives society (Drucker, 2002). Drawing off this sentiment, once a radical servant inspires other leaders, and they inspire more leaders, these radical servant leaders can take control of this new means of production by wresting it away from neoliberals. The question then is: How does this wrestling away from neoliberalism begin, and what does it look like? Below, I have sketched out some hypothetical actions of a radical servant leader.

### **Radical servant leaders in practice.**

When a professor or teacher walks into his or her class room, what do they see? A radical servant leader will see twenty-five student-citizens. Citizenship cannot be a static notion however; rather, citizenship must be redefined in every society. In the information age, citizenship takes on a new definition. If a citizen is to contribute to a republic, that citizen must now have command of a tremendous amount of information. More than this, a citizen must learn how to evaluate, synthesize and present

information to a variety of audiences and political channels. And radical servant leader must cultivate a student-citizens ability to harness information and use it constructively.

There are a variety of methods a radical servant leader can take to achieve this cultivation. The list below is by no means exhaustive, but rather a starting point. For one, taking students to school board, local and state government meetings may be one the most potent ways in which to expose student citizens to the many political channels at their disposal. It is not enough to simply expose students to these democratic channels. Radical servant leaders must equip students with the ability to utilize the vast amount of information at their fingertips and deploy this information in those channels. Professors and teachers can research and introduce topics that will be on school board and town agendas for students to familiarize themselves with the information. From this starting point, students can begin to historicize these issues in state, federal and global contexts.

Students must be made aware of the vast amount of information that is available to them, and not simply the for-profit news outlets. Rather, students must come to understand different sources, such as not for profit media, policy organizations and academic journals. Here, radical servant leaders must demonstrate how to properly evaluate information by looking at sources, whether information is peer reviewed and which entities fund research. Foucault (1977) argues that information is never neutral, but rather a source of power. While the theories of Foucault may be too heavy or abstract for many students, this idea of knowledge as power can be explicated and pursued by teachers and students. Students, with the facilitation of the their professors and teachers and begin to analyze how certain types of information, either medical diagnoses, marital statuses, poverty designations and many other social indicators are not neutral designations but how they can be used as technologies of oppression.

Another important task of radical servant leaders is to teach students to not just evaluate and interpret information, but synthesize it and use it to form their own opinions. Barber (2012) calls this process synthesis,



where students join pieces of existing information to create new information. Synthesis also calls for an understanding of the interdisciplinary nature of information and knowledge. Synthesis is integral for citizens in an information age because students must be able to utilize the information as a lever of political change. Writing is also crucial for this process. Not arcane and pedantic scholarly writing, but rather scholarly writing for civic purposes. Giroux (2014) criticizes many in academia for allowing students to undertake pedantic but “safe” dissertation topics which offend no one but do not actually produce any scholarship worth of value. A thesis cannot just be a pedantic exercise but recast as civic exercise. Writing is communication, and must become a method to present information to a variety of audiences. Scholarly writing, in a vast array of disciplines, can become a way for citizens to act civically by helping them to evaluate existing information and create new information and interpretations both in those disciplines and in an interdisciplinary context.

Moreover, radical servant leaders must also demonstrate to students not only the working of traditional political channels such as local government, but also extra-political channels such as private organizations, NGO’s and other civic organizations. These organizations outside the boundaries of any sovereign state make up the global civil society (Kaldor; 2002; Marginson, Murphy & Peters, 2010). Global civil society is a horizontal mechanism which can circumvent and pressure traditional vertical mechanisms such as state and national legislatures.

Many effective teachers and professors already practice many of the other ideas listed above. Radical servant leaders however must reframe the above activities, and whatever other activities that are pursued, as the process of truth creation. In the information age, truth is motion, it is research and dissemination. Across the world many great professors and teachers lead their students in excellent class discussions. A radical servant leader takes these discussions further into the community. Neoliberalism constricts information but radical servant leaders fight this constriction. More importantly, radical servant leaders teach their students how to fight this constriction and eventually how to become leaders themselves.

## **Leaders as symbols, symbols as movement.**

Some leadership scholars have argued that it is naïve to attribute organizational success solely to a leader's actions. These scholars argue that a leader does not have the ability to effect change; rather, he or she is more of a figurehead. When success or failure occurs, the leader is given the credit or blame (Bohman & Deal, 2008; Cohen & March, 1975; Tierney, 1989). Organizational success is so much more complex than simple causality; a leader can do everything right and his or her organizations can still not be successful. So in essence, the leader's role is really symbolic rather than instrumental (Tierney, 1989).

If this view is applied to radical servant leadership, it might be said that no matter what actions a radical servant leader pursues, the success of his or her movement does not depend on these actions but on a complex arrangement of outside factors over which the leader has little control (Bohman & Deal, 2008; Cohen & March, 1975; Tierney, 1989). If this is true, a radical servant leader's role may be even more important than if success depended on his or her actions alone. If the actions of a radical servant leader were ultimately futile, the leader would still be a symbol which may actually be more powerful than his or her actions. Of course, as pointed out by an anonymous reviewer, as a symbol, radical servant leadership may be nothing more than simulacra. Perhaps Baudrillard would agree, but I depart from Baudrillard here. Baudrillard did not believe truth to be possible anymore, where I believe that radical servant leaders must continuously work to create some type of truth using research, evidence and reason. The symbol of a radical servant leader serving her students may be truer than any simulacrum because radical servant leaders, and their students, are consciously trying to create something true with the vast amount of information at their disposal.

The leader could become a symbol of resistance and could hopefully inspire others to fight neoliberalism. As a symbol, a leader can become something bigger than himself and something that many individuals and organizations draw on for inspiration and guidance (Bohman & Deal, 2008; Tierney, 1989). In the widest sense a radical servant leader may

become the symbol of a new conception of society and history, a dialectal one which can smash hyperreality and lead to something real.

As a symbol, the radical servant leader could come to epitomize a new dialectical stage of history. Whatever the symbol, a revolution is necessary (Mallot, 2012). This is a transformational time in the history of mankind. We may be at the cusp of a new dialectical transformation. This is the dialectic of truth for the information age. This new dialectic must surpass the state of hyperreality that dominates the age of globalization. This process can only proceed if the information of the post-industrial age is given structure. As it stands now, information is unstructured and exploited by neoliberalism and results in the state of hyperreality (Baudrillard, 1994). Information is manipulated by entities seeking profit and control. Entities that have the power to control and manipulate information can create truth in the information age (Baudrillard, 1994). One hallmark of many great leaders is their conceptual ability, their visionary capabilities (Northouse, 2013). A radical servant leader must be able to understand the dialectic, the revolutionary transformation of the current neoliberal post-industrial era where truth is used for profit to a new era of human existence. In this new era, truth would finally be true because it is backed by justice and not the quest for profit. Once a radical servant leader understands the dialectic he or she can then empower his or her followers to become radical servant leaders and direct the dialectic to a new era of human history.

## **Conclusion**

Radical servant leadership derives from the notions of servant leadership and Critical Theory. Servant leadership calls for leaders to make their followers welfare their number one priority and to develop their potential (Northouse, 2013). Radical servant leadership calls for leaders to make the justice of their followers their number one priority and to further inculcate this sense of justice in followers so that they may one day become radical servant leaders themselves and fight for it. Radical servant leadership is also situated within the context of post-industrial society. In post industrial society there is an abundance of information (Bell, 1999; Kellner, 1992). The information that is currently

valued above all else in the post-industrial society is information pertaining to neoliberalism (Giroux, 2011; Peet, 2009). Against this obstacle, a radical servant leader must carve out a democratic space and fight the neo-liberal hijacking of information. A radical servant leader must make information just by rendering it beneficial to the advancement of the human race. The last and most important task of a radical servant leader is to perpetuate dialectal change. This can be accomplished with active theory, by actually teaching and publishing against and around the neo-liberal paradigm.

A radical servant leader must have nothing but altruism in his or her heart for his or her followers and the good of society. At the same time, this same leader must have an unbreakable will to fight the injustice of the market and its antipathy toward public institutions. The desire to fight must be rooted in the knowledge that this fight will ultimately bring about a better, more just society for the present and posterity. In the most far reaching and radical sense, radical servant leadership may offer hope for a new era in human development. In order for this era to truly flourish, it needs to grow from a just and moral society. There is no real notion of ethics, morality or justice in neoliberalism (Giroux, 2011; Newfield, 2008; Peet, 2009). It is the task of the radical servant leader to dialectally establish a sense of justice and ethics for post-industrial society and lead to this new phase in human history. This is not enough however. Followers of radical servant leaders can actually become organs of the dialectic themselves, if the radical servant leader has truly developed their potential and served them well. They will carry on the fight for justice. There is no extra pay for being a radical servant leader; there is no formal prestige or promotions. Rather, it may be a duty for true educators in the age of neoliberalism.

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### **Author Details**

Email: [ajletizia@email.wm.edu](mailto:ajletizia@email.wm.edu)