

## Chapter 12

# Historical Derivative of Servant Leadership and the Untold Story of the Influence of Quakerism on Greenleaf's Teachings

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### ABSTRACT

*Robert Greenleaf reignited an interest in servant leadership; however, the concept is far from nascent. The multivariate religious influences glistening throughout servant leadership, orchestrate a mosaic imbued with benevolence and service. Although servant leadership transcends religion, the Quaker influence on how Greenleaf approached and taught servant leadership is significant yet gregariously absent in the literature. This chapter navigates the unexplored relationship between servant leadership and Quakerism. The chapter additionally encourages more widespread adoption of Smith's servant leadership paradigm, which goes beyond inverting the leadership paradigm and instead blurs the lines between leading and following, resembling a neurological infrastructure. The kaleidoscopic shift that servant leadership imbues maximizes the powerhouse of knowledge inherent in all organizations.*

### INTRODUCTION

Leadership theories have evolved over the past century. A macro view of leadership theory fluctuation commenced with who the leader *is*, permeated to what the leader *does*, and converged to the leadership *environment* (Rauch 2007). In the early 1900s, leadership theories such as the Great Man Theory stated that leaders, who were typically male, were born, not made (Braye,

2000; Murphy, 2005; Daft, 2005). The shift in the 1920s was to trait theories, in which, the organization was the focal point, and employees could continually improve to be a better tool for the organization (Cunningham, 2003). The 1950s introduced behavioral theories which focused on what the leader does; thereafter, the contingency approach theory emerged hypothesizing that a leader's effectiveness was moderated by the situation. Polarizing from this, transformational

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## **Historical Derivative of Servant Leadership**

and charismatic leadership materialized. These leadership theories advocated the importance of the employee and magnified the value of morals.

Gaining concrete momentum is servant leadership. This leadership theory capitulates a shift in focus nascent to most organizations in which the leader serves the need of others first. This chapter will explore a historical perspective of the derivation of servant leadership on Greenleaf and illuminate how Quakerism profoundly influenced how Greenleaf taught servant leadership, which is deficient in the literature. This chapter also encourages a more widespread adoption of Smith's servant leadership paradigm as it visually solidifies the shifting of leading and following prevalent in servant leadership.

## **BACKGROUND AND NEW PARADIGM OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP**

There are over 350 definitions of leadership (Cottrell, 2004; Wright, 2005). Concurring on a definition of servant leadership is equally illusive (Paris & Peachey, 2013); with some claiming that servant leadership is a philosophy and not even a theory (Prosser, 2010). Laub (1999), through empirical testing of servant leadership, initiated the following definition of servant leadership: "Servant leadership is an understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader" (p. 81). Roberts (2013) denoted that "Servant leadership is a value-based approach with a variety of conceptual definitions and frameworks" (p. 54). Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) posited that "Servant as leader is an oxymoron" (p. 57), meaning that servant leadership is difficult to conceptualize, define, and operationalize. Servant leadership has been described as an emerging, holistic approach (Anderson, 2005; Braye, 2000; Horsman, 2001; Laub, 1999; Ledbetter, 2003; Manning, 2004;

Spears, 2005), an archetype (Wallace, 2006), a lifestyle, a sub-type of transformational leadership, a leadership style (Nwogu, 2004), a concept or practical philosophy (Ndoria, 2004a), an eclectic approach (Wells, 2004), and a "philosophy of life" (Spears, 2006, p. 48).

Servant leadership is often described in the following ways: healing, shifting the focus from the bottom line to people, stewardship, empowerment, team work, fluidity between following and leading, shared decision-making, enhancing the work and life of followers, trust, awareness, courage, relinquishing control, and active, empathic listening (Grothaus, 2004; Miller, 2003; Ramsey, 2003; Schwartz & Tumblin, 2002; Swearingen, 2004; Wheatley, 2004). Servant leadership has also been denoted as a "paradoxical perspective" (Hill, 2006, p. 8) of "engaging with the world" (p. 3). Covey explained that Greenleaf posited that, "Servant leadership produces servant leaders in others" (2006, p. 107). Despite the multivariate ways servant leadership has been discussed and researched, there still remains no unanimity in a definition; however, there *is* congruence that servant leadership instigates a definitive paradigm shift (Caughman, 2006; Daft, 2005; Greenleaf, 1977; Poon, 2006).

## **Paradigm Shift**

Servant leadership differentiates itself by shifting the typical hierarchal paradigm in which the CEO exists at the apex of the pyramid and the employees and customers at the bottom. Some articulate that servant leadership is an inverted paradigm, or is "Leadership upside down" (Daft, 2005, p. 230), and is devoid of hierarchy (Poon, 2006; Greenleaf, 1977). Based on this inverted paradigm, the organizational vision encompasses "values and motivations that both sides want to attain" (Caughman, 2006, p. 39). This is a "better way to lead and operate an organization" (Durante, 2005, p. 54).

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