

SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO  
ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

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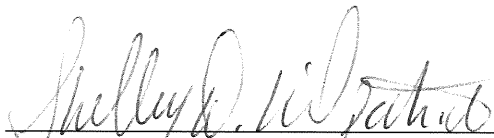
KIRK SLATER

2018

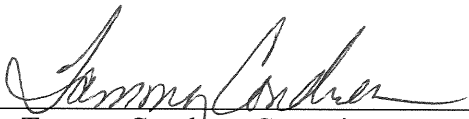
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SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO ORGANIZATIONAL  
EFFECTIVENESS

Presented by Kirk Slater, a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education, and hereby certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.



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SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO ORGANIZATIONAL  
EFFECTIVENESS

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Graduate Education Department  
Southwest Baptist University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

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By

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May 2018

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## ABSTRACT

Sarros (2002) suggested the anecdotal evidence surrounding the theory of servant leadership was plentiful. However, the lack of empirical research has left the theory of servant leadership underdefined (Anderson, 2009; Van Dierendonck, 2011). The researcher sought to address these deficiencies by measuring servant leadership and its correlation with organizational effectiveness. Dr. Kathleen Patterson's theory of servant leadership (2003) and its 7 virtuous constructs of agape love, altruism, humility, vision, trust, empowerment, and service were instrumental in developing scale items for this quantitative study and defining servant leadership. Organizational effectiveness was defined as Missouri school district's Annual Performance Reports (APRs). Only those school districts earning APRs falling in the top or bottom 15% of the MSIP were included within the study. Participants were invited to complete a survey instrument that included a version of Dr. Robert Dennis's Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument (SLAI) and 8 demographic items designed to assist in better understanding those participating. Despite the high internal consistency of SLAI items, the only levels of significance afforded with regard to SLAI scores and APRs were in the areas of a participant's age and a school districts percentage of free and reduced lunch. Age was a unique demographic in that it depicted a correlation and level of significance with not only the SLAI scores, but also subscales of agape love, trust, and empowerment. Also, the percentage of free and reduced lunch demographic had significance in relation to a district's earned APRs. Ultimately, the data showed a higher percentage of those students deemed as free and reduced, falling in the bottom 15% of the state's accountability system than those in the top 15%.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Overview**

Robert K. Greenleaf (1970) launched the servant leadership movement with the publication of his classic essay, “The Servant as Leader.” His various positions included director of management while at AT&T, writer, consultant, and teacher following his retirement in 1964. It was in this essay that “servant leadership” was first referenced. Greenleaf defined the servant-leader as the following:

“The servant-leader is servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions. The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature.” (p. 6)

While reading Herman Hesse’s *The Journey to the East*, Robert Greenleaf admitted that the idea of servant leadership was birthed (Fitzgerald, 2015). It was in the first few pages of Hesse’s work that Greenleaf saw the character Leo as the embodiment of servanthood. Leo was part of a league of sojourners chronicling their experiences on their trek eastward. His presence within the group created a cohesiveness despite each member possessing their own individual goals and purposes for their adventure. With Leo present, there was an air of confidence and sense of direction for the league on a journey that would ultimately come to an end.

Leo suddenly disappeared along the journey and no one knew why or how. Consequently, the group and its members became lost. In the end, it became clear that it was not Leo that abandoned the group, rather it was the other members who had become disillusioned and confused in his absence. Without Leo's unassuming presence and service to the group, they had lost their purpose and their way (Hesse, 1956). In Leo's absence, members' confidence and faith in the team began to falter and the journey was futile. Robert Greenleaf conceptualized Leo as a servant by nature. His servant nature was instinctive, not received nor assumed. This attribute was innate and not to be taken away (Greenleaf, 1977). Larry Spears (2005), former CEO and president of the Greenleaf Center, referenced servant leadership as passionate motivation focused on assisting and meeting the needs of others. Leo exemplified this disposition of sharing power, fostering community, and putting the needs of others before his own (Fitzgerald, 2015).

Servant leadership, according to the Greenleaf Center, is a philosophical set of practices intended to enrich the lives of others, build more effective organizations, and to make this a more caring world (Greenleaf, 1977). This mantra was kindled within Robert Greenleaf during his years at Carlton College in Minnesota. A professor had convinced Greenleaf that large organizations were failing their employees and their resident communities. Upon graduating from Carlton College with a mathematics degree, Robert Greenleaf was immediately hired by AT&T, one of the largest companies in the world. He quickly moved up in the company serving in a variety of capacities, ultimately serving as the director of management development. After his 38th year of service, Greenleaf retired. Upon reflection, he noticed during his tenure with the communication giant, certain flourishing companies that partnered with the organization. He recognized

that the strong leadership of those respective organizations operated as support coaches. These leaders were meeting the needs of both employees and the organization simultaneously. Greenleaf would later comment, “The organization exists for the person as much as the person exists for the organization,” (Frick, 2016, para. 3) an unpopular message at that time.

There was one single characteristic that resonated with Greenleaf, one that defined the servant leader from other leaders: the desire to serve others (Keith, n.d.; Letizia, 2014). Spears (2010) described a servant leader as one who was in tune with the voices of others and those found within themselves. He described it as an inner consciousness allowing for the analysis and synthesis of verbal and nonverbal cues. Spears referenced it as a uniqueness within the theory of leadership, making it a personal paradigm where the thoughts and actions of others were continuously examined. This uniqueness has been said to have healing qualities for those leading and for those being led (Spears, 2010). By serving others, the needs of oneself and others are met simultaneously, a principle upon which servant leadership rests (Fitzgerald, 2015).

### **Biblical Undertones**

Whetstone (2001) defined the servant leader as emerging internally as if something spiritual. He went as far as to attribute a spiritual quality as an underlying premise for its utilization. Patterson (2003) corroborated these beliefs, suggesting spiritual underpinnings were at work along with virtuosity within the paradigm of servant leadership. These perspectives along with Greenleaf’s own admission that his ideal pursuit of servant leadership came as a result of Judeo-Christian influences (Greenleaf, 1977) causes one to question whether or not the theory of servant leadership was simply a

reflection of the teachings of Christ. As Christ's teachings brought with them a new revolutionary approach to life, so servant leadership brings with it a revolutionary approach to leadership as it challenges organizations around the world to rethink how they lead.

According to Frick (2016), Robert Greenleaf credited his ideal pursuit of servant leadership as a by-product of his Judeo-Christian influences. He believed servant leadership to be for all religious faiths and secular institutions. This pursuit ultimately became a passion and academic scholars ultimately credited him as the father of servant leadership. However, nearly 2,000 years ago, a Jewish carpenter named Jesus was admonishing followers to place the needs of others as a priority and taught that it was better to serve rather than be served. Jesus made clear that he had not come to be served, but to serve (Mark 10:45, New International Version).

### **Jesus the Servant**

Just as Robert Greenleaf believed that leadership evolved through service, Jesus too believed that to lead was to serve. References are littered throughout the Bible addressing leadership and serving. Jesus is quoted saying,

“You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all” (Mark 10:42-44 New International Version).

There is a resounding theme within scripture of how an effective leader should operate. In Luke 22:26 (New International Version), Jesus once again established his fundamental approach to leadership when He said, “But you are not to be like that.

Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.” He went on to say, “The greatest among you will be your servant” (Matthew 23:11, New International Version). Jesus behaviorally exemplified this in the book of John. It was here that Jesus washed the disciples’ feet just prior their last meal together, a meal that would later be known as the *Last Supper*.

In first-century Israel, the responsibility fell upon the servant of the house to ensure that those entering a home would have their feet clean and washed. In John 13:1-17 (New International Version), the Bible referenced Jesus taking a towel and basin of water and washing His disciples’ feet. This demonstration was simply a foreshadowing of Jesus’s ultimate act of love and humility that would later be depicted with His crucifixion.

In the book of Matthew 20:28 (New International Version), Jesus referenced that He did not come to be served, but to serve, and give of Himself willingly. His crucifixion on the cross exemplified the paradigm of servant leadership as He willingly gave of Himself so that others would benefit. His hope was that others would have life, and not just life, but life more abundantly through His death (John 10:10, New International Version).

As Jesus depicted a lifestyle of selflessness, service, and sacrifice, the lives of those He encountered would never again be the same. The purpose of this study was to identify those district heads who, like Jesus, demonstrated qualities and characteristics of servant leadership and its effects on organizational effectiveness. A purposive sampling limited the study to those district heads of districts earning Annual Performance Reports (APRs) falling within the top or bottom 15% of total possible points earned.

## **Problem Statement**

The expectations placed on school leaders today are exceedingly more complex and demanding than in previous years (Normore, 2004); hence the need for a viable leadership theory that will effectively address the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Peterson, 2002). This quest for a leadership paradigm that addresses the rapidly changing culture and the myriad of educational needs entering the schoolhouse today is paramount. Normore (2004) suggested that as building and district leaders seek to lead and promote best practices, there are stakeholders that seek value, professional growth, input, and a learning environment equipping students for the marketplace. The needs at stake are real and the desire for authentic, reliable, and credible leadership is even greater.

Despite its nascence over four decades ago, servant leadership remains a theory that is understudied while still practiced in many organizations (Bass & Bass, 2008). From its inception, Robert Greenleaf (1977) forewarned the theoretical framers that his servant leadership would be arduous in its applications and functionality. His conceptualization of what servant leadership was and was not has created reservation within the minds of academic scholars. Its uniqueness has opened the door to a myriad of interpretations over the years, causing the theory of servant leadership to be more than simply a managerial tool. For example, researchers Parris and Peachey (2013) interpreted servant leadership as a way of life rather than a technique applicable within the field management.

In the 1950s and 1960s, leadership was viewed as that conduct that mobilized followers and subordinates in hopes of attaining goals within an organization. Said conduct was multidimensional in that it was required to meet a myriad of subordinate

needs (Northouse, 2013). It was in 1970 that Robert Greenleaf coined servant leadership as one of those styles of conduct. Its approach, unorthodox in every way, placed the welfare of the subordinate as the highest priority within the organization (Barnabas, Anbarasu, & Paul, 2010). Greenleaf (1977) admitted servant leadership would be difficult to implement for it is neither scholarly nor is it from a step-by-step manual.

Consequently, the theoretical message of servant leadership has created a quandary in that it operates in two uniquely different, yet connected areas within the realm of leadership. It includes the observable actions, the successes and failures that can be evaluated by the casual observer (Prosser, 2010). It also includes the genetically engrafted attributes within a leader that define character and commitment to those they lead (Pawar, 2014; Prosser, 2010). Again, this uniqueness is what begs the question of its viability. In the end, regardless of the theoretical message, the successes and/or failures of the respective servant leader are predicated upon the character and level of commitment in serving others (Parris & Peachey, 2013).

Despite the proliferation of servant leadership following Robert Greenleaf's 1970 publication, *The Servant as Leader*, there has yet to be sufficient research measuring its effects on organizational effectiveness within the educational setting. The majority of the research available has been limited to developing theoretical frameworks, assisting scholars in measuring servant leadership (Parris & Peachey, 2013). There does not exist a comprehensive summary of empirical studies analyzing servant leadership and only a limited amount of empirical research is available in determining if servant leadership is an actual tenable theory (Parris & Peachey, 2013; Yukl, 2002). The current research within the educational setting has been restricted to single case studies in rural

communities (Anderson, 2006). This research involving a sample population of not only rural but also suburban and urban school settings could potentially strengthen the validity and value of current research.

Andersen (2009) and Van Dierendonck (2011) were in consensus when referencing the paradigm of servant leadership as underresearched, leaving its theoretical framework underdefined and its definition in question. Therefore, the goal was to define a theoretical framework in an effort to better define and apply servant leadership as a viable leadership theory (Keith, 2008; Prosser, 2010). This study offered a unique perspective regarding servant leadership as it attempted to identify the relationship between servant leadership and organizational effectiveness.

### **Rationale for the Study**

In the article, “Perspectives/The Silent Strugglers,” Scherer (2006) referenced the struggles within the educational setting. Scherer explained the obstacles of ensuring success within the classroom and the importance of acknowledging such obstacles. She then insisted that leaders go above and beyond to serve their followers and to ensure their successes (Scherer, 2006). Scherer begged the question of whether educators are truly equipped and ready to assist the silent strugglers (Scherer, 2006). Whether it’s the classroom teacher effectively empowering their students, building leaders empowering their staff, or district leaders empowering building leaders, those in front must be equipped to address the various needs of those they lead (Fitzgerald, 2015; Normore, 2006).

The theory of servant leadership has been lauded where conceptual frameworks have abounded but has yet to be researched empirically. According to Sendjaya and

Sarros (2002), there exists a plethora of anecdotal evidence surrounding the servant leadership paradigm yet there remains a deficiency in empirical literature regarding the prevalence of servant leadership within organizations. This lack of empirical research has left the theory of servant leadership underdefined (Andersen, 2009).

This study contributed to the theory of servant leadership as the researcher investigated its relationship with organizational effectiveness as it relates to earned APRs within Missouri's accountability system for public school districts. The researcher surveyed those district heads across the state of Missouri whose districts earned APRs ranking in the top 15% or bottom 15% of all districts within the state of Missouri. Survey instruments identified those district heads manifesting the qualities and characteristics of servant leadership embodied within the seven constructs of agape love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service.

The APRs measured the districts' organizational effectiveness in meeting the five performance standards outlined within the state's accountability system, the Missouri School Improvement Plan (MSIP 5). This plan was developed as the state's school accountability system for reviewing and accrediting public school districts in the state of Missouri. The MSIP 5 performance standards were as follows: academic achievement, subgroup achievement, college and career readiness, attendance rate, and graduation rate (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [DESE], 2014).

### **Research Questions**

1. How likely is it for a district head within a school district earning an APR in the top 15% to self-identify as a servant leader?

2. How likely is it for a district head within a school district earning an APR in the bottom 15% to self-identify as a servant leader?
3. From school districts earning APRs in the top 15%, what constructs of servant leadership are district heads more likely to practice?
4. From school districts earning APRs in the bottom 15%, what constructs of servant leadership are district heads more likely to practice?
5. What demographics are consistent with those district heads self-identifying as servant leaders?

### **Statement of Null Hypothesis**

The null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between servant leadership and organizational effectiveness.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The complexity of Greenleaf's concepts regarding the theory of servant leadership has left room for a variety of interpretations. This variety has cultivated a myriad of perspectives and viewpoints throughout the world of academia. Russell and Stone (2002) identified nine distinctive characteristics of servant leadership, along with an additional 11 attributes supporting the previous nine. Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) developed an integrated model categorizing servant leadership into five factors and Van Dierendonck (2011) concluded with a conceptual model identifying six key characteristics of servant leadership.

The multitude of conceptual frameworks prevalent throughout literature left one contemplating just how to effectively define this leadership paradigm. Dr. Kathleen

Patterson sought to address this in her theory of servant leadership. With its seven constructs quantifying the characteristics of a servant leader (Patterson, 2003), the researcher deemed it the most advantageous theoretical perspective regarding servant leadership.

It was Thomas Merton (1955), a Trappist monk, who believed weaknesses, deficiencies, and limitations of human beings established the need to understand one another. The theory of servant leadership attempted this very thing as it sought to address the whole person, a pursuit between both leader and follower addressing the spirit, confidence, direction, and the competence of subordinates (Greenleaf, 1977). For this to have occurred, an understanding of one's own weaknesses and the weaknesses of others was essential in accomplishing this endeavor (Fitzgerald, 2015). A holistic approach differentiated the servant leader from all others, addressing a myriad of individual needs while simultaneously meeting the overall organizational needs. Parris and Peachey (2013) referenced this level of commitment in serving others as a lifelong journey for the servant leader.

Due to its unique style, the paradigm of servant leadership had been promoted in many of the top scholastic institutions of our day such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard Business School (Parris & Peachey, 2013). It was sought after by top corporations and championed by some of the greatest visionaries of the last century such as Mother Theresa, Mohandas Gandhi, and Martin Luther King (Parris & Peachey, 2013). Servant leadership had even been compared to the teachings of Jesus Christ, who was heralded as the predecessor of servant leadership (Ebener & O'Connell, 2010; Jacobs, 2006; Lanctot & Irving, 2010).

Within scripture, the Apostle Paul shared with those at the church of Philippi that Jesus, who being God incarnate, became a servant in an effort to connect with His creation and that they would do well to serve just as Christ came to serve them (Philippians 2:5-7, English Standard Version). The servant leader, functioning in a similar capacity, served others by impacting growth, health, autonomy, and societal status of others (Greenleaf, 1970). Greenleaf believed within every servant leader, there existed an authentic desire to serve, which leads to an in-depth understanding of how to meet the needs of others (Fitzgerald, 2015). This depth of understanding ultimately established a working environment of community, a pillar in the theory of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977).

Along with its undefinable love and infinite and subtle actions, the theory of servant leadership remains unique and distinct, defying the role of traditional leadership and defining effective leadership (Greenleaf, 1977). Its manifold characteristics contribute to the unexplained phenomena resulting from other existing theories and their inability to explain the unexplainable, thus, necessitating the need for more theoretical perspectives and giving rise to a more comprehensive view of leadership within the workplace (Patterson, 2003).

This study revealed the need for more research addressing the empirical versus the antidotal as suggested by Sendjaya and Sarros (2002), but at the same time contributed to addressing the phenomena of serving before leading. Using public school districts from the state of Missouri as laboratories and their district heads as subjects, the researcher sought to use Patterson's seven constructs as a tool in measuring the

practice and prevalence of servant leadership and its correlation with organizational effectiveness.

### **Limitations**

1. Open and honest responses from participants via quantitative research could pose a challenge in achieving an appropriate level of reliability and validity.
2. The absence of empirical literature referencing servant leadership and its effects on organizational effectiveness can inhibit the research process.
3. The absence of an established instrument self-assessing a leader's practice of servant leadership may have an adverse effect.
4. Maintaining an unbiased perspective regarding the analysis of data was critical given the researcher self-identified with the theory of servant leadership.

### **Delimitations**

1. The study was delimited to district heads in the state of Missouri.
2. The research was delimited to district heads of districts achieving APRs within the top 15% or bottom 15% of the state's school accountability system.
3. A select group of demographics was chosen for statistical analysis.
4. The researcher was delimited in assuming honest responses from participants.

### **Design Controls**

A quantitative study was used by the researcher in surveying district heads from across the state of Missouri whose school districts achieved APRs that fell within the top 15% or bottom 15% of the MSIP 5, the state's school accountability system. The survey instrument measured the practices and prevalence of district heads identifying with servant leader characteristics as defined by Patterson's 7 virtuous constructs of servant

leadership. It also provided insight into each participant through the collection of demographic information describing individual participants.

A correlational analysis was conducted with APR scores earned via the MSIP 5 and those scores derived from the survey instrument. This was accompanied by a *t*-test comparing instrument scores of servant leaders whose districts earned APRs within the top 15% and those earning APRs in the bottom 15%, in hopes of identifying differences between groups. The researcher used MSIP 5 data from the 2015-2016 school year per DESE.

The correlational analysis was to measure the relationship of servant leadership with organizational effectiveness. A correlation coefficient was statistically calculated to determine the strength and direction of the given relationship. The researcher anticipated a significant positive relationship; consequently, as the presence and practices of servant leadership increased, so would the district APR.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

1. Missouri School Improvement Plan 5 (MSIP 5). The state's school accountability system. Within this system, schools are evaluated on the following five standards: academic achievement, subgroup achievement, college and career readiness/high school readiness, attendance rate, and graduation rate.
2. Organizational Effectiveness. The culture and working atmosphere found within an organization, including but not limited to aesthetic, organizational, and effective conditions (Senge, 1990).

3. Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument (SLAI). A survey instrument developed by Dr. Robert Dennis to measure the seven constructs of Dr. Kathleen Patterson's theory of servant leadership.

4. Servant Leadership. A leadership style focusing on serving others by investing in their development and well-being for the benefit of accomplishing tasks and goals for the common good (Page & Wong, 1998).

5. Transformational Leadership. An ethical leadership style that involves promoting intellectual stimulation through inspiration (Choudhary, Akhtar, & Zaheer, 2013).

### **Summary**

Chapter One introduced the paradigm of servant leadership and its founder Robert Greenleaf to the reader. Despite Robert Greenleaf's reputation as the father of servant leadership, there were several references and implications made throughout the chapter suggesting that the teachings of Christ may very well have been the predecessor of servant leadership. The researcher suggested that these teachings could potentially be viewed as the forerunner of the leadership paradigm we know today as servant leadership.

Despite its documented presence, practice, and positive effects on subordinates, the theory of servant leadership and its relationship with organizational effectiveness has yet to be measured at the district level within public education. This existing research gap necessitated the need for additional research, thus prompting this study.

Chapter Two will be a review of literature defining leadership and discussing four prominent leadership styles from the last 5 decades including servant leadership. An analysis comparing and contrasting the different styles will be made along with an in-

depth discourse addressing the qualities and characteristics of servant leadership. The researcher included a definition of organizational effectiveness as it related to culture, job satisfaction, and productivity. Its definition was further clarified, outlining how organizational effectiveness would be measured for purposes of the study. The chapter will culminate with the introduction of Dr. Kathleen Patterson's theory of servant leadership and its association with the work of Dr. Robert Dennis, the Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument (SLAI). Patterson's seven virtuous constructs will be identified and described in detail along with an explanation of the significance of Dennis's instrument and its relationship with Patterson's servant leadership constructs.

Chapter Three will outline the methodology used within a quantitative study of collecting data, performing a correlation analysis, *t*-tests, and one-way analysis of variances (ANOVAs). The process of establishing a viable and reliable instrument will be articulated. The survey instrument consisting of 51 scale items including the SLAI will be introduced along with respective participants. Said participants were reflected as those district heads in districts earning APRs within the top 15% or bottom 15% of the state's accountability system, the MSIP 5. The analysis will provide insight into the prevalence and practice of respective servant leader constructs and prevalence of self-proclaimed servant leaders. Chapter Four will provide the results from the SLAI along with data from the correlation analysis, *t*-tests, and one-way ANOVAs. Chapter Five will include a summary of the purpose of the study, implications of the findings, and suggestions for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### **Introduction**

According to Parris and Peachey (2013), the field of leadership is one of the most highly researched behavioral topics of scholars today. As our culture changes, so do the needs of subordinates and the need for effective leaders. Organizations identifying with leaders who share similar values and principles is paramount. In the same manner, leaders often desire to align themselves with a leadership style that best reflects their own personal values and principles. Phipps (2012) also referenced this correlation between choosing a leadership paradigm and how values and principles dictated this choice.

This solidified the question of importance in selecting the right leadership style when all organizational goals, learning, and performance were at stake (Berson, Shamir, Avolio, & Popper, 2001). As organizations sought to identify the right leadership, understanding phenomena that leaders encountered was found to be helpful. Kuhn (1970) referenced leaders at times participating in unexplainable behaviors when leading an organization. He suggested in those times, leadership paradigms were often revisited and new ones adopted in an effort to explain the unexplainable. This often gave rise to new theoretical perspectives in efforts of augmenting and creating a more comprehensive search within the field of leadership (Kuhn, 1970). In the pursuit of new theoretical perspectives, a consensus had yet to be reached regarding a comprehensive understanding or an agreement amongst the theorists understanding effective leadership (B. N. Smith, Montagno, & Kuzmenko, 2004).

In the following review of literature, the researcher defined and characterized leadership. The background and characteristics of popular leadership paradigms such as

charismatic, transactional, and transformational were discussed, concluding with the paradigm of servant leadership. During the discussion, an analysis comparing and contrasting these paradigms with servant leadership was made accompanied by a discourse regarding the spiritual aspects and qualities associated with servant leadership.

The researcher defined servant leadership as it relates to Dr. Kathleen Patterson's theory and its seven constructs. Dr. Robert Dennis's SLAI was introduced as a tool in measuring the prevalence and practice of servant leadership in relation to Patterson's constructs within an organization. The complexities of organizational effectiveness were outlined and their correlation with leadership emphasized. In conclusion, the researcher identified measures of organizational effectiveness and the aspect of accountability as it relates to the given study.

## **Leadership**

### **Definition**

In answering the question of what leadership entails, Lao Tzu, the ancient Chinese philosopher and writer once stated, "A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves" (Mar, 2013, para. 5). Napoleon Bonaparte, a French military leader and emperor who conquered most of Europe in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, described leadership as "A leader is a dealer in hope" (Mar, 2013, para. 1).

Throughout history many types of leadership styles have emerged. It has been a pursuit of mankind since the beginning of time, from the ancient Egyptian pharaohs to the modern day dictators, kings, and presidents. Leadership has been the demise of many and an enduring legacy for others. Empires have risen and fallen, economies have grown

and crashed, and learning environments have flourished and grown stagnant due to leadership or the lack thereof.

### **Characteristics**

Every leader has his or her own style of leadership. At times, leaders may even consciously and/or unconsciously vacillate between leadership attributes. Recently, *The Leaders Edge* (Hannon, 2017) asked leaders to explain what leadership meant to them.

The following were their responses:

- improving the environment
- knowing yourself and those around you
- meeting the needs of others
- being genuine and positive
- creating clarity, confidence, and courage
- building consensus
- problem solver
- thinking big
- advocating for others
- creating followers
- listening

It is obvious that leadership is a complex process having multiple dimensions. It has endured many changes throughout the years in regard to its focus. The first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century defined leadership as controlling and depicting a centralization of power (Northouse, 2013). In the 1940s, it was leadership by persuasion; in the tumultuous 1960s, it was leadership promoting individual shared goals (Northouse,

2013). In the 1970s and 1980s, there was a proliferation of scholarly and popular works with a myriad of themes ranging from what the leader wants to advocating higher levels of motivation and morality for both leader and follower (Northouse, 2013).

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Northouse (2013) referenced that scholars and those in academia came to the agreement that leadership was simply going to be a complex conceptual phenomena and agreed leadership could be categorized by the following four components: (a) leadership is a process, (b) leadership involves influence, (c) leadership occurs in groups, and (d) leadership involves common goals. With these four components in mind, Northouse defined leadership for the masses by calling it a process of one individual influencing others towards a common goal. Kouzes and Posner (2007) defined leadership as modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart. They called these the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership. It is evident within these examples that leadership is not defined by one's personality but by one's behavior. As Kouzes and Posner referenced, leadership is busy modeling, challenging, enabling, and encouraging those they are leading.

In this review of literature, it is interesting to note evidence of these very same characteristics referenced in historical works such as the Bible. In these ancient writings, Jesus Christ challenged his followers to replicate his example when he said, "Be holy, because I am holy" (I Peter 1:16, New International Version). In the same manner, the Apostle Paul exhorted the church of Galatia to remember the law of Christ when he said, "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2, New International Version). By his own admission, these Judeo Christian principles were what propagated Robert Greenleaf's ideal pursuit of servant leadership (Greenleaf,

1977). It comes as no surprise that servant leadership does have spiritual connotations (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002).

## **Charismatic Leadership**

### **Brief History**

There has been a great deal of discussion regarding whether charisma is developed or if someone is genetically endowed with this character trait, and if charismatic leadership is actually effective (Riggio, 2012). Weber (2014) described charisma as type of revolution producing followers with absolute allegiance. Those with charismatic leadership traits were viewed as special, possessing transcendent qualities and/or abilities, having great referent power and influence (Bass, 1985; Weber, 2014). What we do know is that charismatic leaders are persuasive and effective communicators. They are not only eloquent but are also able to communicate with subordinates on a deeper and emotional level (Guillen & Gonzalez, 2001; Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003; Riggio, 2012). As they articulate a compelling and captivating vision, they often become a catalyst to intense emotions and strong beliefs in those they lead (Riggio, 2012).

### **Influence and Inspiration**

Charismatic leaders are often confused with transformational leaders as they share the same desire to influence and inspire others (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999; Howell & Shamir, 2005; Spahr, 2016). They share a common commitment in motivating and progressing those organizations and/or societies in which they reside (Spahr, 2016). Despite their similarities, the charismatic leader will differ largely, partly due to their influence in the realm of social change. It is their tendencies in incorporating unconventional behaviors free from rigid structures in an effort to accomplish a desired

outcome that truly define and separate them from the other leadership paradigms (Spahr, 2016).

### **Building Culture**

This leadership style is founded upon a set of unique characteristics enabling leaders to lead their followers by creating a commitment around a shared vision and set of core values (Ehrhart & Klein, 2001; Hellriegel, Slocum, & Woodman, 2001; Jacobsen & House, 2001). Riggio (2012) identified four charismatic qualities that define charismatic leaders:

1. influencing others in a moral and positive manner;
2. inspiring others to perform duties and tasks thought impossible;
3. building trust and persuading others to follow despite disagreements; and
4. maintaining an understanding of the needs of followers and the current crisis or need for change.

The emphasis of charismatic leadership is upon the masses, relying on individual personality, conviction, and a commitment to a specific cause (Spahr, 2016).

## **Transactional Leadership**

### **Brief History**

In 1947, a German sociologist, Max Weber, identified this style of leadership as being *rational-legal* and later defined it as an act of controlling based on one's knowledge base (Spahr, 2016). It was not until 1978, with the publishing of James Burn's classic, *Leadership*, that the paradigm of transactional leadership emerged (Spahr, 2016). Burns was a Pulitzer Prize winner, biographer, and political scientist known for his work in the area of leadership (Burns, 1978). He perceived the transactional leader to espouse

qualities such as honesty, fairness, responsibility, and a desire to keep commitments (Spahr, 2016). However, he did describe another side to the transactional leader, ascribing scathing attributes such as “a horse trader, offering jobs for votes, or supporting legislation in exchange for campaign contributions” (Weber, 2014, para. 11). It is those differences between coalitions and their need for resources that makes power such a key commodity during scarce times.

### **Self-Serving**

During these times, the transactional leader may operate in a self-serving manner in order to achieve power and influence decisions. Pfeffer (1992) referenced this kind of power as coercive through influencing behavior by getting others to do things they would normally not do. Social scientists even suggested a link between power that was deemed coercive and the unmet needs of others. They concluded the one in need is ultimately at the mercy of the one with leverage and/or power (Bolman & Deal, 2013). The need for power becomes an instrument of our social existence requiring individuals to jockey for influence at every level (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977; Bolman & Deal, 2013). It is this contrast that makes transactional leadership inferior when compared to servant leadership (Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Bhatia, 2004). The transactional leader has functioned and will continue to function based on the knowledge available to them, whether it be those attributes deemed as fair and honest or those quantified as scathing and self-seeking.

### **Evolution**

It was the late 1980s and early 1990s in which transactional leadership took on a literal new dimension. Spahr (2016) stated researchers Bernard Bass, Jan Howell, and

Bruce Avolio viewed transactional leadership as dimensional as defined by the following characterizing traits:

1. leader rewarding contingent upon met expectations;
2. leader creating an atmosphere of autonomy in the absence of problems (passive management); and
3. leader anticipating problems, monitoring progress, and identifying corrective measures through active management.

## **Transformational Leadership**

### **Brief History**

The term *transformational leadership* was actually first coined by James Downton in 1973. He was a sociologist recognized for his research regarding charismatic leadership, activism, and various religious movements (Downton, 1973). Again, as in the case of transactional leadership, it was not until 1978 that the paradigm of transformational leadership emerged on the scene as a prominent leadership theory with the publishing of James Burn's classic *Leadership*. Burns (1978) was known for his work in the area of leadership with respect to United States presidents. It was said that during Kennedy's presidency, Burns had unrestricted access to JFK, using the oval office as a working lab in the study of leadership (Weber, 2014). So as the early 1970s ushered in the theoretical perspective of servant leadership, the late 1970s witnessed the inception of transformational leadership (Patterson, 2003).

### **Nature of Leadership**

According to Weber (2014), Burns set out to understand the nature of leadership by focusing on and examining the relationship between the personalities of those leading

and the events for which they were held accountable. He perceived the majority of leadership as transactional where exchanges between a leader and subordinate defined the work climate (Weber, 2014). This would have included exchanges incorporating pay incentives for increased production or threats of termination for decreased production. Burns saw transformational leadership as the polar opposite. Rather than exchanges defining the relationship between leadership and subordinates, transformational leaders sought to engage their followers. These connections were used to motivate not only subordinates but leadership as well (Burns, 1978). Burns called it a practical form of leadership (Burns, 2007). Subordinate commitment rallied around organization objectives and were empowered to achieve objectives (Avolio & Bass, 1994; Yukl, 2002).

**Empowerment.** Transformational leadership is participatory and democratic in its nature. Instead of exercising domination over others, transforming leaders encourage and inspire subordinates to rise above self-interests and work together in an effort of achieving goals that transcends individual interests (Burns, 2007; Hacker & Roberts, 2003). The breadth and depth of change fostered by this leadership paradigm is literally transforming with empowerment as the ultimate goal (Burns, 2007; Pawar & Eastman, 1997).

**Behaviors.** Avolio and Bass (1988) believed transformational leadership could be theorized by the following four behavioral components:

1. Idealized influences - influencing others in a moral and positive manner.
2. Inspirational motivation – inspiring subordinates to perform with respect.
3. Intellectual stimulation – acting as a catalyst for creativity and innovative decision-making.

4. Individualized consideration – giving careful attention to various subordinate needs.

Hurley and Hult (1998) described similar behaviors as transformational leaders promoted a sense of unity within an organization, demonstrated an intellectual consideration for addressing problems, and championed learning and innovation when identifying solutions. However, transformational leadership has been characterized as possessing limitations. Yukl (2002) referenced one of those in the area of clarity leading to a misinterpretation of the paradigm itself.

**Shared commitments.** Patterson (2003) referenced transformational leadership as simple and applicable in a myriad of situations. It was simple enough that Bass (1996) believed followers pursuing transformational change could and would transform themselves. As the transformational leader challenges subordinates to meet and exceed organizational goals, the end result was to empower subordinates while developing a shared commitment in reaching organizational goals (Yukl, 2002).

### **Transformational Versus Charismatic**

According to Avolio and Bass (1988) both transformational and charismatic leadership advocated interacting in a positive and moral manner while inspiring followers to perform respectfully. However, they argued that despite similarities, charismatic leaders failed to promote creativity and innovative thinking and were often derelict in identifying and meeting the various needs of their subordinates. This was significant in relationship to the effects each paradigm had on its respective followers (Avolio & Bass, 1988). The behavioral components of intellectual stimulation and individualized

consideration found in a transformational leader were simply nonexistent in a charismatic leader.

### **Affirmation of Transformational and Charismatic Similarities**

Riggio (2012) reaffirmed Avolio and Bass's (1994) claims of transformational leadership reflecting a type charismatic leadership. He referenced transformational and charismatic leaders alike, depicting a positive and moral example for their followers (e.g., Martin Luther King Jr., Gandhi, and Winston Churchill). Riggio suggested each paradigm shared in a spirit of sacrifice along with their followers and were traditionally, as he put it, the "face" of the organization (para. 6). Transformational and charismatic leaders alike both shared in their ability to motivate followers through inspiration. They were gifted as they inspired others to function and operate at higher levels, demonstrating a sense of loyalty and commitment to the cause (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Riggio, 2012). These paradigms provided self-worth and meaningfulness, giving rise to emotions in the life of a subordinate, creating an almost charismatic appeal to those practicing transformational leadership (Burns, 2007). Due to such theoretical and empirical similarities, previous research often used the terms of *charismatic* and *transformational leadership* interchangeably (Howell & Shamir, 2005).

### **Transformational Versus Transactional**

Burns (2007) felt compelled to differentiate between transactional and transformational leadership. He wanted to show the two were not simply variations of the same thing located on the spectrum of leadership. Distinguishing between these two involved defining the following verbs: change and transform. He argued this is what differentiated transactional from transformational leadership. Transactional leadership

involved changing or substituting one thing for another. On the other hand, transformational leadership was an evolution from one thing into another (Burns, 2007).

### **Transformational Versus Servant Leadership**

While servant leadership hints of a spiritual element creating a culture of service, the paradigm of transformational leadership lends itself to a more empowered dynamic culture (B. N. Smith et al., 2004). However, as with servant leadership, transformational leadership influences, communicates, and listens while empowering and encouraging effective performance by its subordinates (Choudhary et al., 2013; Parolini, Patterson, & Winston, 2009). Its strength is found in the subordinate; however, its premise tends to focus on organizational learning and objectives (Choudhary et al., 2013). This stands in stark contrast to servant leadership where the focus is on its followers.

Though both servant and transformational leadership styles share similarities, there are differences that ultimately impact organizational performance (Choudhary et al., 2013). Unlike servant leadership, transformational leadership has been known to violate the ethical norms of employee development while attempting to achieve organizational objectives (Stephens, D'Intino, & Victor, 1995). Yet it has been called an ethical leadership style as it promotes inspiration through intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influences (McColl-Kennedy & Anderson, 2005).

Transformational leadership varies as it focuses on inspiring others and utilizing this inspiration to motivate others (Avolio et al., 2004). The emphasis is on learning and development within individual followers; hence, the followers are equipped to attain organizational goals (Choudhary et al., 2013; Freeborough & Patterson, 2015). Quantitative analysis has shown that transformational leadership, when compared with

servant leadership, depicts a more positive relationship with organizational learning (Choudhary et al., 2013). According to Peter Senge (1990), in order for organizational learning to advance, transformational leadership is vital.

Although transformational leadership appears to provide a viable approach in achieving organizational effectiveness, some suggest the theory itself is ambiguous, creating a wide range of interpretation (Yukl, 2002). For instance, transformational leadership fails to explain characteristics such as altruism and humility (Patterson, 2003). Kuhn (1970) referenced these failures as evidence for the need of additional theoretical perspectives.

## **Servant Leadership**

### **Brief History**

In 1970, Robert Greenleaf launched the servant leadership movement with the publication of his classic essay, *The Servant as Leader*. In his essay, Greenleaf described the leader functioning in the capacity of a servant, meeting the needs of those around him. It was Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) articulating this resounding theme of Greenleaf and other scholars alike that differentiating servant leadership from the other paradigms in its primary motivation of serving first and leading second. Greenleaf had literally coined a paradigm established centuries ago, echoing the sentiments of Jesus from the ancient biblical text when He said, “Even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28, English Standard Version).

**Leo encounter.** It was not until Greenleaf’s exposure to Leo, a character in Herman Hesse’s 1956 novel *Journey to the East*, that servant leadership was birthed. It

was the spiritual journey of Leo, a servant who ultimately became a spiritual guide and leader, that inspired Greenleaf to believe the viability of an individual not only serving, but leading as well (Fitzgerald, 2015). This leadership paradigm would become unlike any other in the field as it attempted to explain phenomena within leadership that past and current theories could not explain. Constructs such as altruism, humility, and love continued to manifest themselves in the lives of leaders and yet were absent from literature as to why they existed (B. N. Smith et al., 2004). They were constructs of virtue focusing on subordinates needs, person oriented and follower focused, creating safe and vibrant working relationships within organizations. Organizational concerns were now becoming peripheral and subordinate needs were now taking on a sense of immediacy (Bass, 1996; B. N. Smith et al., 2004).

**Spiritual influence.** Along with its newfound popularity, the spiritual connotations behind servant leadership's premise have remained intact. It was Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) who emphasized the constructs of servant leadership possessing spiritual connotations (Striepe, Clarke, & O'Donoghue, 2014). Greenleaf himself was a Quaker; hence, his writings were littered with the Quaker teachings and practices (Frick, 2016). They emphasized decision making that involved consensus. They embraced silence, listening, reflection, and at times some necessary persuasion (Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010).

It was John Woolman, an 18<sup>th</sup>-century Quaker, who single-handedly convinced his fellow Quakers that slavery was unacceptable to God. He was one of many influencing how Greenleaf perceived others and the world of business (Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010). Other influences including that of his father, George; the author and

poet E.B. White; and Lutheran clergyman Nikolay Fredrick, who demonstrated that servant leadership could transform a country; they all collectively contributed to how Greenleaf would later view the theory of leadership (Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010).

### **Definition**

A common theme was apparent as the needs of the follower were paramount. Greenleaf referenced that through awareness, foresight, and skill for listening, the servant leader could hone in on the needs of followers (Greenleaf, 1970). Rather than focusing on the needs of the leader, the focus was now on the character and level of commitment the leader possessed in serving others (Patterson, 2003; Parris & Peachey, 2013). Servant leadership stood alone as the style that placed the emphasis on the interests of the followers (B. N. Smith et al., 2004). It differentiated itself from other leadership styles in terms of sacrifice and altruism in meeting the needs of subordinates (Parolini, 2007). Ultimately, the focus of servant leadership was on the leader, whose focus was on the follower (Burch, Swails, & Mills, 2015).

### **Theoretical Perspectives**

Laub (1999) saw the good of the subordinate as a priority over the needs of those leading. He saw servant leadership consisting of six key variables present within a servant-led organization. This type of organization prioritized valuing others, developing people, building community, creating authenticity, providing leadership, and sharing leadership in an effort to ensure organizational effectiveness (Laub, 1999). Laub's assessment tool became known as the Organizational Leadership Assessment (Parris & Peachey, 2013).

Larry Spears (2004) went on to supplement Laub's work by identifying 10 characteristics derived from Greenleaf's writings. Listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community were deemed as characteristics evident in the life of a servant leader. Spears shared Greenleaf's mantra regarding servant leadership, stating the servant leader led through persuasion rather than coercion (Spears, 2010).

The paradigm of servant leadership ultimately became the antithesis of how leadership paradigms were often viewed: fraught with deception and manipulation (Fitzgerald, 2015). Spears was validated in that coercing followers into a premeditated path was nonexistent in the life of a servant leader (Spears, 2010). This simply confirmed Greenleaf's fundamental belief that the servant leader always sought to serve first and to lead last (Greenleaf, 1970).

**A consensus.** Although there were many sharing similar views and perspectives in the area of servant leadership, there still remained a lack of consensus amongst scholars. The question of how to define servant leadership once and for all and explain its theoretical framework had left it relatively underdefined (Andersen, 2009; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Regardless of how scholars viewed servant leadership, its premise was universally accepted as a process that began with a desire to serve rather than be served (Greenleaf, 1970).

In the midst of the theoretical, conceptual, and empirical debates, scholars were challenged to assess whether those being served were actually benefiting. So the question remained, whether or not individuals affected by servant leadership were actually becoming healthier, wiser, freer, and more autonomous subordinates as a result of this

unique leadership paradigm (Greenleaf, 1970). Among the myriad of theories and frameworks, scholars were making a concerted effort to wrap their minds around and make sense of servant leadership.

**Spiritual element.** To compound the phenomena, scholars such as Whetstone (2001) and Patterson (2003) were advocating a form of spiritual underpinnings and virtuosity driving the paradigm of servant leadership. It was Whetstone (2001) who actually defined the servant leader as possessing virtuous qualities emanating from one's character, emerging internally as if spiritual. He went as far as to attribute a spiritual quality as an underlying premise for its utilization. Patterson (2003) propagated this same message, calling the focus of servant leadership virtuous. She identified servant leadership as seven virtuous constructs comparable to the *Beatitudes* found within the book of Matthew of the Bible. It was in the *Beatitudes* that Christ outlined eight virtues or qualitative characteristics reflective of those constructs found in Patterson's theory of servant leadership.

Patterson's constructs were based on Biblical principles found in historical literature. For example, in Matthew Chapter 5, the Bible references Jesus viewing the multitude and going onto a mountainside to sit and dialogue with his disciples. His message to his disciples is known as the "Sermon on the Mount." In this message, He spoke of the blessings endured upon those who are poor in spirit, those who mourn, those who are meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, those who are merciful, those who are pure in heart, those who are peacemakers, and those who are persecuted (Matthew 5, New International Version). It was these characteristics that Jesus saw as synonymous in the life of those who were to be called blessed or worthy to be called

servants of the Most High. Patterson's seven virtuous constructs evolved from those eight spiritual characteristics, thus, reinforcing Whetstone's emphasis of a spiritual component within servant leadership (Patterson, 2003).

### **Perceptions**

According to B. N. Smith et al. (2004), the universality of both servant leadership and transformational leadership was not yet clear. Scholars were questioning which theory was more appropriate for certain organizational contexts. The question remained: Were servant and transformational leadership equally appropriate for all organizational contexts, or were there specific contexts that were more suited, making one advantageous over the other? These considerations were worth exploring as organizations sought best practices when determining effective leadership. Graham (1991) suggested that servant and transformational leadership vary in that servant leadership allows for a greater capacity for passivity within the life of a follower.

Keith (2008) believed the idea of serving first to be in direct contrast with one desiring to lead first. It was Greenleaf (1977) who referenced this mantra to be significantly and profoundly effectual upon society if put into practice. This idea of celebrating individual uniqueness and cultivating creativity would potentially open the door for replicating the service mantra in others (Wis, 2002; Patterson, 2003; P. R. Smith, 2003). From the beginning, Greenleaf (1970) defined service as an internal desire. This act of service was personal, it required time, and had an ultimate profound impact on all those deemed as recipients.

**Factors.** There appeared to be a myriad of perceptions surrounding servant leadership and with those perceptions, was a myriad of influential factors such as gender,

time in current position, and professional experiences, which often determined how individuals perceived servant leadership (Ekinci, 2015). Just as Patterson defined the servant leader with her seven constructs, Ekinci (2015) defined the servant leader as one possessing empathy, altruism, humility, integrity, and acting justly. Larry C. Spears (2010), former president and CEO of the Greenleaf Center, continued the conversation, further quantifying the servant leader as an effective listener, possessing healing qualities, having an awareness, being persuasive, having the ability to conceptualize, having foresight, being a good steward, being committed to the growth of people, and being a community builder.

**Defining characteristic.** The one attribute that all scholars and the world of academia can agree upon is that servant leaders seek to serve first and lead second (Greenleaf, 1970). It is this defining characteristic that makes servant leadership unique and distinct in the realm of leadership. Despite its notoriety, there is not yet conclusive evidence indicating benefits of servant leadership exceeding those of other paradigms. However, the spiritual, generative culture that servant leadership emanates cannot be dismissed or denied.

### **Theoretical Comparisons**

B. N. Smith et al. (2004) believed both transformational and servant leaderships to possess qualities and characteristics rooted in the study of charismatic leadership. Graham (1991) went a step further and argued that charismatic leadership was not only rooted in but was the theoretical cornerstone of servant leadership. She suggested that both transformational and servant leadership were both inspirational and moral similar to the charismatic construct (Graham, 1991).

As in the case of servant leadership, the transformational leader equally seeks to identify its followers' motives in an effort to meet the most significant needs and engage the whole person (Weber, 2014). The resulting outcomes included strengthened relationships, followers becoming leaders, and ultimately, leaders becoming moral agents (Weber, 2014). These resulting changes were often accompanied by or viewed as a metamorphosis, transforming structures and the organization itself. Burns saw these changes as current conditions often relating to the inner character of those in leadership (Burns, 2007). Robert Greenleaf (1970) referenced this inner character as a quality that championed service over personal gain. Despite its similarities with servant leadership, there were times when transformational leadership lacked in altruism and humility, the cornerstones of servant leadership (Patterson, 2003).

### **The Unconventional Servant Leader**

According to Parris and Peachey (2013), the unconventional approach of servant leadership has been researched across a myriad of contexts (Fridell, Belcher, & Messner, 2009; Parris & Peachey, 2013). The paradigm has received notoriety and popular press from many of the organizational management authors who have lauded its impact on organizational effectiveness (Covey, 1990; Senge, 1990). Servant leadership was capable of creating a work culture fostering trust, equity, cooperation, and support. This was critical for creating a culture enhancing individual and organizational effectiveness (Flint & Grayce, 2013; Parris & Peachey, 2013).

Along with its notoriety and popularity, the empirical evidence indicated servant leadership to be a tenable theory; however, in the area of organizational effectiveness, sufficient empirical research was still necessary (Parris & Peachey, 2013). Hence, the

paradigm of servant leadership continued to be tested both qualitatively and quantitatively through studies abroad and at home (Parris & Peachey, 2013).

Choudhary et al. (2013) referenced servant leadership and its holistic focus on the individual. They suggested by addressing the needs of the follower, the knowledge capability of an organization increased, thus having a positive impact on the organization.

### **Paradigm Shift**

The ideal, hierarchical-oriented leader of the past has now become less attractive in the mind-set of mainstream organizational thinking. Leadership that once gave priority to the needs of the organization is now looking to the needs of those that define the organization. The paradigm shift is placing a premium on relationships and collaboration with others. In the midst of all these changes, organizations are turning to servant leadership; yet, ironically it has taken 4 decades to receive this level of prominence (Chan & Make, 2014; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010). Nearly two decades into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the notoriety of servant leadership is on the rise. Whether at home or abroad, organizations are reconsidering their leadership models in an ongoing effort to meet the needs of those they serve (Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010).

### **Patterson's Theory**

In 2003, Dr. Kathleen Patterson, serving as an associate professor at Regent University's School of Global Leadership and Entrepreneurship, defined her theory of servant leadership by identifying the following seven virtuous constructs (Appendix A): agape love, altruism, humility, vision, trust, empowerment, and service (Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010). Patterson began her work at Regent University in 1999 as an integral part of the School of Leadership and Studies. As the current director of the

Doctor of the Strategic Leadership program at Regent University, Patterson has been deemed an expert in the area of servant leadership, conducting discussions attended by both scholars and practitioners alike (Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010).

Patterson's theory of servant leadership centered on her seven virtuous constructs defining a servant leader. When describing her theory of servant leadership, she outlined a sequence of constructs prevalent in the lives of those considered servant leaders. Each construct acted as a precursor of the ensuing constructs (Patterson, 2003), beginning with agape love and ending with service. Kathleen believed the presence of agape love was a catalyst to altruism and humility. These constructs were precursors to trust and one's aptitude for casting a vision. The remaining two constructs of empowerment and service are simply the by-products resulting in leading by serving others, the very heart of servant leadership.

In this study, the researcher chose to examine Patterson's seven virtuous constructs in determining the relationship between servant leadership and organizational effectiveness. Patterson conceptualized her constructs as a collection of values; understanding the organizational endeavor was too large for just one person. These values were to support, recognize, and unleash the uniqueness and creativity of each individual (Patterson, 2003; Rieke, Hammermeister, & Chase, 2008; Jaramillo, Grisaffe, Chonko, & Roberts, 2009; Babakus, Yavas, & Ashill, 2011). These values allowed the servant leader to do just that, equipping them with a teachable spirit, empathy for others, a life of discipline, a concern for the organization, and desire for mercy (Parris & Peachey, 2013). Patterson (2003) recognized that servant leaders considered the needs of

their followers as priority. Each subordinate was viewed as a whole person having needs, wants, and desires.

### **Constructs**

According to Parris and Peachey (2013), these referenced characteristics and qualities are littered throughout Patterson's seven constructs. Patterson's (2013) theory begins with the construct of agape love towards those they lead, followed by a lifestyle of humility and altruism, culminating into a culture of trust and vision for those subordinates, and ending with a sense of empowerment and service. The sequential order is relevant as each construct builds upon the previous construct.

**Agape love.** The first construct, agape love, is the foundation of servant leadership and focuses on doing right, at the right time, for the right reasons (Winston, 2002). This perfect timing is to never be at the expense of the subordinate, regardless of consensus (Fitzgerald, 2015). Its very nature creates a sequential focus as the servant leader focuses on the individual first, their talents second, and the impact one's talents have on the organization (Patterson, 2003). This love exhibits itself in multiple ways, depicting appreciation, celebrating contributions, listening, effectively communicating, and showing empathy (Gunn, 2002; Patterson, 2003).

Agape love empowers leaders to love unconditionally, to appreciate their followers, refusing to be self-focused, and genuinely caring for their people (Sandage & Wiens, 2001; Russell & Stone, 2002). Fitzgerald (2015) referenced this love fostering a working community where values and purposes are shared as beliefs and best practices emerge. The existence of community evolves as the servant leader takes an absolute

responsibility for the growth of every follower. For this to come to fruition, the servant leader must love everyone they lead (Fitzgerald, 2015).

**Humility.** The second construct, humility, is a paradox, for it is often misinterpreted and viewed as one who is weak, permissive, and or having a poor self-esteem. On the contrary, Sandage and Wiens (2001) saw humility from a different vantage point. They considered it an attribute where one is able to keep accomplishments and talents in perspective. Scholars have suggested that servant leadership has borrowed many of its characteristics from the teachings of Jesus Christ (Ebener & O’Connell, 2010; Hamilton & Bean, 2005; Winston, 2004). As in the historical literature of the Bible, the Apostle Paul admonished those in the Philippian church to avoid acting out of selfish ambition, but rather to conduct oneself in humility (Philippians 2:3-4, New International Version).

Swindoll (1981) identified the greatest characteristic of the servant leader as one with the ability to show humility, one who is genuinely humble and incapable of esteeming oneself (Bagger, 2002). The servant leader is not interested in being exalted or receiving the credit but rather being accountable to those they serve (Swindoll, 1981). This mantra is what separates the good leaders from the great leaders (Collins, 2001). A servant leader understands they may not always have the answer; however, they are willing to give of themselves to assist in solving the problem (Covey, 2002).

**Altruism.** The third construct, altruism, compels one to assist another just for the sake of helping (DeYoung, 2000; Kaplan, 2000). Arjoon (2000) concurred describing the servant leader as one with a desire simply to act in an appropriate manner. There is no extrinsic motive, just a naturally occurring desire to meet other’s needs. According to

Kaplan (2000), despite the sacrifice or risk associated with meeting the needs of others, the servant leader will ignore personal interests in an effort to benefit those they lead. Altruism is imperative to the mentality of servant leadership as leaders consistently seek to fulfill the needs of others (Patterson, 2003; Shaw & Newton, 2014).

**Vision.** The fourth construct, vision, is unique in regard to servant leadership. Rather than focusing on the future of the organization, the servant leader is focused on the future of the individual members of the organization (Patterson, 2003). Within this focus lies awareness, foresight, and effective skills for listening (Greenleaf, 1970). Spears (2010) saw this as enabling the servant leader to assist others in learning from the past and present, and about consequences of future decisions. Understanding the potential of those they lead and how it relates to their futuristic picture has caused some to view the servant leader as possessing a level of omniscience (Wis, 2002).

The servant leaders consistently serve with the end in mind while looking ahead to further empower others (Patterson, 2003). They consistently strive to identify the strengths and weaknesses of those around them in an effort to better serve (Patterson, 2003). It is this mantra that creates a sense of wholeness as they assist others in attaining a vision that otherwise would have been unattainable (Greenleaf, 1977; Harvey, 2016). Servant leaders are simply dedicated to the growth and welfare of people (Contee-Borders, 2002). Their mission is to elaborate the well-being of their followers, honing in on service involving those they lead in the areas of learning and developing (Choudhary et al., 2013). Having a vision for what others could be or should be is the foundational aspect of servant leadership (Farling, Stone, & Winston, 1999; Greenleaf, 1977).

Fitzgerald (2015) believed the holistic effects of servant leadership require a level of stewardship that is concerned with the well-being of every individual they lead. Spears (2010) described the servant leader as one who nurtured, attempting to foster growth in every facet of the follower and his or her leadership. The foundation of stewardship is a commitment to genuine concern for the needs of others by valuing others as fellow human beings (Fitzgerald, 2015). Greenleaf (2002) stated the importance of addressing the spirit, confidence, direction, and competence of subordinates when leading. This valuation of others allows servant leaders to experience a reciprocal recognition in return (Fitzgerald, 2015).

**Trust.** The fifth construct, trust, is an essential component in the organizational culture (Fairholm & Fairholm, 2000). Trust is a virtue that aligns itself with ethical behavior, integrity, character, and service within the organization (Harris, 2002). Servant leadership has been called the ethical leadership style (Ehrhart, 2004; Choudhary et al., 2013). Northouse (2013) stated the foundational component of servant leadership is ethics. It is an ethical response to followers and society in general that facilitates a level of trust within the organizational culture. Having the capacity to trust in others creates a spirit of excellence throughout the organization (Patterson, 2003). As a servant leadership philosophy, trust creates a work environment where input is valued and people work collectively and collaboratively (Kezar, 2002; Shaw & Newton, 2014).

**Empowerment.** The sixth construct, empowerment, has been deemed as the most important characteristic of servant leadership (Russell & Stone, 2002). It is the catapult creating value, confidence, self-esteem, and self-actualization, and emphasizing teamwork (Patterson, 2003; Russell & Stone, 2002). Feedback, an essential component of

empowering others, is highly valued by those practicing servant leadership. Blanchard and Hodges (2003) differentiated between the servant leader and the self-serving leader based on how each one responded to feedback. The self-serving leader responds to feedback in a negative manner, whereas the servant leader values feedback in hopes of using it to empower those they lead. Northouse (2013) stated the act of soliciting feedback as being a characteristic of one practicing servant leadership.

The servant leader emanated a style depicting care, guidance, motivation, and empowerment towards the subordinate (Greenleaf, 2002; Shaw & Newton, 2014; Spears, 2004). This provided quality relationships between subordinates and those in leadership. The servant leader's ability to develop community within the workplace and convey a sense of stewardship was ultimately defined by their willingness to empathize, address emotional needs, and depict a social and emotional awareness of those they were leading (Northouse, 2013). Empowered subordinates ultimately grow and develop, accomplishing goals and making dreams a reality (Patterson, 2003). Veronesi (2001) concluded that working environments and organizations void of empowerment lack the essentials to foster an environment of servant leadership.

**Service.** The seventh construct, service, is the culmination of the previous constructs and is at the heart of servant leadership. Greenleaf believed the servant leader possesses an internal desire to serve others, which ultimately evolves into a desire to lead (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). It is this internal desire compelling the servant leader to involve themselves on a personal level, creating an atmosphere of authentic service, utilizing their time, energies, and even personal resources (Swindoll, 1981). To ultimately serve, one has to be willing to invest (Wis, 2002; Russell & Stone, 2002)

## **Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument**

The Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument (SLAI) was the first instrument to measure factors of servant leadership (Dennis, 2004). The creator of the SLAI, Dr. Robert Dennis, has served as a vocational rehabilitation specialist at the Veteran's Medical Center in Dayton, Ohio, a published author, and a faculty member at Wilberforce University (Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010). The intention of the instrument was to provide a measure regarding the viability of each construct in its ability to define the servant leader (Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005).

Patterson's seven virtuous concepts served as the subscales for constructing the scale items of the SLAI. The SLAI was to serve as a tool for self-identified leaders in measuring their effectiveness as servant leaders. For purposes of this study, the SLAI was used in determining the relationship between servant leadership and organizational effectiveness.

## **Organizational Effectiveness**

### **Definition**

*Merriam Webster* defined "*effectiveness*" as relating to an organization having produced a desired result ("Effectiveness," 2017). According to Cameron and Whetten (1996), identifying the best criteria for organizational effectiveness was virtually impossible and did not exist. Due to individuals and/or organizations struggling in defining expectations, those expectations changing over time, and the contradiction of expectations held by others, a consistent set of effectiveness criteria was simply not feasible (Cameron & Whetten, 1996).

Bluedorn (1980) argued effectiveness was determined by the ability of an organization to accomplish its set goals. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) referenced organizations accomplishing or achieving effectiveness by acquiring needed resources. There was also a school of thought identifying effectiveness as an organization's internal function remaining consistent without strain or stress (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). The myriad of interpretations and conceptual frameworks of what organizational effectiveness was and was not had created a chaotic condition in the world of scholarly literature. At one point, a moratorium on all scholarly works addressing organizational effectiveness was being recommended (Hannan & Freeman, 1977).

In the midst of the chaos surrounding the conceptualization of effectiveness, Cameron and Whetten (1996) identified three reasons why organizational effectiveness was here to stay and why it was worth pursuing. First, they believed that embedded within every conceptualization of organization lies the understanding of the difference between effective and ineffective functioning. Second, they argued that the evidence of effective performance was the dependent variable necessary in all organizational research. Third, those in leadership are continuously forced to make decisions regarding the effectiveness of their respective organizations.

In the '60s, '70s, and '80s, the vast majority of empirical assessments of organizational effectiveness consisted of ratings addressing simply the overall effectiveness of an organization (Webster, 1985). There was very little that addressed the empirical relationships of the various dimensions and/or their predictors within the organization (Cameron & Whetten, 1996). It was evident there was a need for an informed assessment of organizational effectiveness and that this assessment should

address several critical aspects. According Cameron and Whetten (1996), the following seven questions served as guidelines in assuring the reliability and accuracy in measuring organizational effectiveness:

1. What time frame? The importance of understanding the short-term effects verses the long-term effects must be addressed.
2. What level of analysis? The assessment of effectiveness at one level may not necessarily match the effectiveness at another level (e.g., individual, departmental, and entire organization).
3. Whose perspective? Different constituencies often define effectiveness differently.
4. What domain of activity? Effectiveness in one domain of an organization may adversely affect the effectiveness in another domain.
5. What is the purpose behind the evaluation? One's purpose can determine the consequences and criterion being measured.
6. What type of data? Different data points can produce different conclusions regarding the effectiveness of an organization (e.g., culture, productivity, and job satisfaction).
7. What is the standard to which effectiveness is being measured? No universal standard exists against which to measure organizational effectiveness and performance.

These guidelines were to offer a link addressing the conceptual and empirical issues surrounding effectiveness as they assisted in defining the process along with its definitions and approaches.

## **Factors of Leadership**

With steps being made in an attempt to address the complexities associated with systematic empirical assessments of effectiveness, scholars were recognizing and referencing the influences that leadership had on the effectiveness of organizations. Barrow (1977) referenced leadership as the foundation of all organizations and that leaders determined the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization. A new generation of leaders was evolving in which one's beliefs were contributing to one's chosen leadership paradigms (Phipps, 2011). This shift was ultimately impacting the decision-making process and the overall effectiveness of the organization. Servant leadership was one of those paradigms benefiting the organization by awakening, connecting, and investing in employees. Individuals were being engaged as those having a heart, mind, and soul, consequently, positively impacting the organization (Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010). This was in direct contrast with the Machiavellian leadership style, where the focus was on everything but the follower. The heart of servant leadership had a subordinate focus, rather than an organizational focus.

Cyert (1990) described a leadership paradigm as a skill that influenced others within an organization and attracted others toward a common goal for the betterment of the organization. It was the leadership paradigm, embodied within every organization, which ultimately determined the level of efficacy and efficiency of an organizational setting. In an effort to understand the complexities associated with various leadership paradigms, organizations began using less conventional approaches in maximizing organizational effectiveness (Choudhary et al., 2013), hence, the introduction of servant leadership. The mechanisms associated with various other leadership paradigms were

intended to assist in understanding the nature and consequences of decisions made within organizations (Bass & Bass, 2008). Rather than making comparisons between the amount of input and output of an organization, they were now investigating areas such as ethical engagement and moral relationships as aspects of leadership in measuring organizational effectiveness (Choudhary et al., 2013).

**Feedback.** Blanchard and Hodges (2003) saw feedback as an approach creating positive impact on organizational effectiveness. This feedback was viewed as relative to the perceived leadership characteristics identified and observed by subordinates. The disconnect between how a leader viewed themselves compared to how their followers viewed them ultimately had an adverse effect upon the organization. This disconnect often manifested itself in low morale, ineffective communication, and a loss of work productivity (Burch et al., 2015). On the other hand, when there was a strong correlation between how the leader viewed themselves compared to how their followers viewed their leadership, the result ended with a positive significant impact upon organizational health (Northouse, 2010).

**Trust.** Sendjaya and Pekerti (2010) referenced establishing justice and organizational trust in an effort to promote best practices and ensure organizational effectiveness. They called it procedural justice, where followers experienced affirmation and fair treatment. This promoted an atmosphere of trust towards the respective leader and amongst those within the organization (Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010).

**Collaboration.** Kotter (2001) recognized effectiveness and efficiency, made possible through a collective shared vision. He believed the process acted as a catalyst in creating a path that followers would travel to arrive at success. In the process, teams

developed and organizational effectiveness became apparent as collaboration flourished (Ehrhart, 2004; Chung, Jung, Kyle, & Petrick, 2010). These types of cultures created working conditions where organizational citizenship and benevolence became the norm, improving organizational effectiveness (Ehrhart, 2004; Hu & Liden, 2011).

Fitzgerald (2015) saw this collaboration as a means to an end where the ultimate goal was consensus. The organizations fostering consensus were more equipped in meeting the various needs of their followers with a communal approach. He suggested consensus building as a useful tool in developing a plan of action, fostering personal growth, and creating an atmosphere where the team is championed and everyone is welcome at the table (Fitzgerald, 2015).

### **Accountability**

**No Child Left Behind Act.** In any organization, accountability has been and will always be a critical component of organizational effectiveness. Within education, the word *accountability* has been associated with holding districts, schools, educators, and students responsible for their performance. Recently, stakeholders have sought to see the same emphasis placed on school effectiveness.

Bloomfield and Cooper (2003) suggested the need for accountability lingering since the mid-1990s and ultimately finding its way into federal law with the signing of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA). This 2001 legislation became the hallmark of then President George W. Bush's administration as it represented sweeping reform in the area of education. The body of legislation not only tied student performance to organizational effectiveness, but also required the reporting of such results. The NCLBA was now requiring each state to have an established accountability plan in place to

monitor student performance and ultimately to gauge organizational effectiveness. It was simply a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 (Gamson, McDermott, & Reed, 2015).

The ESEA had expanded the role of the federal government, providing sustainable educational aid to the states for the first time. President Lyndon B. Johnson, the architect of the ESEA, championed the increase of federal aid to state education (McGuinn, 2015).

Along with the government's increased financial role within education, the ESEA also became a key component regarding the desegregation of public schools. Those states failing to meet federal guidelines of the 1964 Civil Rights Act would be in jeopardy of losing their allotted amount of federal education funds (McGuinn, 2015). This result was viewed by many as catastrophic given the sizable amounts of funding accompanying the crafting of the ESEA.

Though the purpose of the ESEA was to improve the educational opportunity for the poor, it addressed very little with regards to accountability. It was not until the 1994 Improving America's Schools Act that the federal government renewed its focus on student achievement, school reform, and overall accountability of public education at the state level (McGuinn, 2015). With the development of the NCLBA, the federal government had now fundamentally altered its relationship with the states in education policy. These new developments were now involving the federal government in core matters of school governance relating to academic standards, assessments, school choice, and even school restructuring (McGuinn, 2015).

**Every Student Succeeds Act.** In the post-NCLBA era, the federal government continued to expect states to develop new systems for tracking student achievement and addressing struggling school districts. In December of 2015, the NCLBA was revised, reauthorized, and renamed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). It was an exciting time for all stakeholders as federal law had now included mandates supporting gifted and talented students (Welch, 2016). The ESSA essentially took back much of the federal government's role in the affairs of education at the state level (Klein, 2017). The government's large footprint previously established with the ESEA had now been diminished. Everything from state assessments to low-performing school districts was effected as states were afforded the authority in making their own decisions. The Act's full implementation was to take effect within the 2017-2018 school year (Klein, 2017).

**Missouri School Improvement Plan.** In 1990, the state of Missouri began its own attempt to create accountability by implementing the Missouri School Improvement Plan (MSIP). The MSIP became the state's accountability system for purposes of equipping all students for success in school and the future market place. As referenced, the MSIP began in 1990 and entered its fifth cycle in 2013 (Appendix B); hence, the MSIP 5 is a product of a living document that has evolved over the last 16 years as the state attempts to promote continuous improvement and innovation (DESE, 2014). It is a tool instrumental in calculating APRs for both district and individual schools within the state. Earned APRs ultimately determine whether or not school districts are deemed as nonaccredited, provisionally accredited, accredited, or accredited with distinction.

## Summary

Chapter Two was a review of literature defining leadership and discussing four prominent leadership styles from the last 5 decades including servant leadership. An analysis comparing and contrasting the different styles was made along with an in-depth discourse addressing the qualities and characteristics of servant leadership. The researcher included a definition of organizational effectiveness as it relates to culture, job satisfaction, and productivity. Its definition was further clarified, outlining how organizational effectiveness would be measured for purposes of the study. The chapter culminated with the introduction of Dr. Kathleen Patterson's theory of servant leadership and its association with the work of Dr. Robert Dennis, the Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument (SLAI). Patterson's seven virtuous constructs were identified and described in detail along with an explanation of the significance of Dennis's instrument and its relationship with Patterson's servant leadership constructs.

Chapter Three will outline the methodology used within a quantitative study of collecting data, performing a correlation analysis, *t*-tests, and one-way ANOVAs. The process of establishing a viable and reliable instrument will also be articulated. The survey instrument consisting of 51 scale items including the SLAI will be introduced along with respective participants. Participants were reflected as those district heads in districts earning APRs within the top 15% or bottom 15% of the Missouri's accountability system, the MSIP 5.

The analysis will provide insight into the prevalence and practice of respective servant leader constructs and prevalence of self-proclaimed servant leaders. Those districts earning APRs within the top 15% percent of the MSIP 5 are deemed as having

high organizational effectiveness, while those in the bottom 15% of the MSIP 5 are deemed as having low organizational effectiveness. Chapter Four will provide the results from the SLAI along with data from the correlation analysis, *t*-tests, and one-way ANOVAs. Chapter Five will include a summary of the purpose of the study, implications of the findings, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER THREE  
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

**Introduction**

Given the servant leaders' history and tradition of building healthy working relationships, encouraging creativity, modeling altruistic behaviors, and prioritizing the well-being of followers (Babakus et al., 2011), it would appear that servant leadership would be the only option in which to lead. Robert Greenleaf knew better. The father of servant leadership admitted that the paradigm of servant leadership was not received by all nor was it appropriate for every organization and/or institution (Greenleaf, 2002).

The purpose of this study was to show that the practice and prevalence of servant leadership has a positive effect on organizational effectiveness. The analysis of survey data measured the prevalence and practice of Patterson's (2003) seven virtuous constructs within the lives of select district heads in the state of Missouri. Despite the relationship between servant leadership and organizational effectiveness, a better understanding of Patterson's seven virtuous constructs provided insight into best practices relating to the theory of servant leadership. Within the research, APRs represented the district's ability to meet state benchmarks in the areas of the state's accountability system, the MSIP 5.

**Research Questions**

The research focused around the prevalence of servant leadership in public school districts and charter schools earning APRs falling in the top 15% or bottom 15% of the MSIP 5. The following questions were developed to guide this study:

1. How likely is it for a district head within a school district earning an APR in the top 15% to self-identify as a servant leader?

2. How likely is it for a district head within a school district earning an APR in the bottom 15% to self-identify as a servant leader?
3. From school districts earning APRs in the top 15%, what constructs of servant leadership are district heads more likely to practice?
4. From school districts earning APRs in the bottom 15%, what constructs of servant leadership are district heads more likely to practice?
5. What demographics are consistent with those district heads self-identifying as servant leaders?

### **Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>)**

The null hypothesis was that there is no relationship between servant leadership and organizational effectiveness. Independent sample *t*-tests and multiple regression analysis were paramount to its validation. The researcher hoped to build credibility in the study's findings given the contrast of earned APRs found in the top and bottom 15% of the state's accountability system.

### **Variables**

The independent variable was servant leadership. The dependent variable was organizational effectiveness represented by district APRs. Subscale scores, SLAIs, and APRs were all deemed as continuous variables.

## **Participants**

### **Selection and Sampling**

It was determined the researcher would use purposive sampling, a nonprobability sampling technique (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). The districts were selected based on their respective district APRs falling within the top 15% or bottom 15% of the state's

accountability system, the MSIP 5. There were 551 school districts recognized in the state within the 2015-2016 school year; 82 districts with APRs ranging from 98.6 to 100 represented the top 15% and 82 districts with APRs ranging from 28 to 83.2 represented the bottom 15% of all APRs earned. For research purposes, the top and bottom 15% of the MSIP 5 represented organizational effectiveness and organizational ineffectiveness respectively.

As referenced above, the APRs represented the district's ability in meeting state benchmarks in the areas of the state's accountability system. The performance standards were as follows (Appendix C):

1. Academic Achievement - District administers assessments to measure academic achievement and demonstrate improvement of students over time.
2. Subgroup Achievement - District demonstrates improvement of subgroup's performance.
3. College and Career/High School Readiness - District adequately equips students for postsecondary and secondary opportunities.
4. Attendance Rate - District ensures regular school attendance.
5. Graduation Rate - District ensures all students successfully complete high school (DESE, 2014, pp. 6-7).

Ultimately, the intended purpose for the MSIP 5 was to provide a valid, accurate, and meaningful approach in measuring the performance of schools and their respective school districts. The rationale stemmed from an understanding that not all schools are high performing and periodically may need assistance in identifying innovations designed to promote continuous improvements. The state's accountability system sought not only

to aid in improvement, but also it served to recognize those school districts that were achieving desired outcomes. Along with desired outcomes, the researcher sought to derive a better understanding of the continuous variables (e.g., district APRs, SLAI scores, and individual subscale scores) and their correlation with the practice and prevalence of servant leadership.

By deliberately choosing participants based upon their district's APR rankings, the researcher was able to distinguish between organizational effectiveness and organizational ineffectiveness as designated by the research groups. The researcher utilized data derived from DESE to identify APRs from the 2015-2016 school year and their respective districts and district leaders. Those participating were entered into a raffle with an opportunity of winning a \$100 gift card.

### **Participant Characteristics**

Participants within school districts achieving APRs in the top 15% or bottom 15% within the MSIP 5 during the 2015-2016 school year were surveyed. Given there were 551 school districts in the state of Missouri, this meant the researcher was to receive survey responses from 82 district heads representing districts falling in the top 15% and 82 district heads representing districts falling in the bottom 15% of the MSIP 5. There was no distinction made among districts based on size, types of communities (e.g., rural, suburban, or urban), or the educational background of participants.

The sample was predominately middle-aged with the mean age of 49.46 ( $SD = 8.19$ ). Participants' ages ranged from 35 to 67. There were nearly twice as many male participants as female participants with the sample reflecting a predominately White

ethnicity. Over 90% of those participating had obtained a degree beyond a master's, with 41% having earned a specialist and nearly 51% having a doctorate.

Tenure as the district leader (e.g., superintendent, chief operating officer, chief executive officer, executive director, head of school, administrator, or principal) ranged from 1 to 35 years with a mean of 13.21 ( $SD = 7.65$ ). The data indicated a majority of participants, within their current districts, had reached and exceeded tenure status with mean years of 9.07 ( $SD = 7.75$ ) and Modes of 1 and 3. Years in the current district ranged from 1 to 31.

There were concerns regarding the small sample size within the study; however, concerns were addressed by ensuring an appropriate cross-section of data derived by analyzing the upper and lower tiers of the state's accountability system. The contrast in the top 15% versus the bottom 15% was thought to possess informative insight regarding future best practices associated with the theory of servant leadership within Missouri public school districts and charter schools.

### **Research Design**

The researcher selected the SLAI in an effort to address the needs of a quantitative method. The survey instrument consisted of the SLAI and additional demographic items for better understanding of participants. It should be reiterated that scale items from the SLAI were modified with permission from its creator, Dr. Robert Dennis (Appendix D). Modifications were to assist participants in self-evaluating one's practice of servant leadership as defined by Kathleen Patterson's (2003) seven constructs of servant leadership. Participants were contacted via e-mail to complete an online questionnaire. The questionnaire contained 51 scale items with 42 items representing the

SLAI and eight consisting of demographic items assisting the researcher in better understanding participants. The questionnaire was designed to be completed in approximately 7 to 8 minutes.

## **Instrumentation**

### **Survey Instrument**

The SLAI was deemed the most appropriate instrument for this study based upon its origin in validating Patterson's (2003) seven constructs of servant leadership. It was necessary for the researcher to correspond with Dr. Dennis in an effort to secure permission in utilizing the SLAI (Appendices E & F). According to Dennis (2004), previous attempts had been made in measuring servant leadership; however, prior attempts only measured characteristics of the organization acting in the capacity of a servant leader. On the contrary, the SLAI measured characteristics of servant leadership as depicted by the leader of the organization (Dennis, 2004).

The purpose of the SLAI was to measure Patterson's (2003) theory of servant leadership in which she identified seven constructs exemplifying the servant leader. Patterson's identified constructs included agape love, altruism, humility, vision, trust, empowerment, and service. Dennis's (2004) SLAI consisted of 42 items measured on a 6-point Likert scale with *0 being strong disagreement and 6 being the most agreement possible*. According to Dennis (2004), the SLAI had a strong overall  $\alpha$  with high Cronbach's alphas in individual constructs (e.g., agape love  $\alpha = .94$ ; humility  $\alpha = .92$ ; vision  $\alpha = .89$ ; trust  $\alpha = .89$ ; and empowerment  $\alpha = .94$ ). No Cronbach's  $\alpha$  scores were available for those factors with less than three items loaded; consequently, the constructs of altruism and service could not be included as factors (Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005). Of

the seven constructs within Patterson's theory, the constructs of altruism and service were yet to be thoroughly assessed by the SLAI (Dennis, 2004). Despite these limitations, the researcher was encouraged with the understanding that the SLAI was the first instrument to measure characteristics of servant leadership of a leader versus those in the past measuring servant leadership of an organization only (Dennis, 2004).

For purposes of this study, the survey instrument consisted of all 42 SLAI items and eight additional demographic items. The 42 items were drawn from Dennis's (2004) original work measuring Patterson's (2003) seven servant leadership constructs and the additional eight items were included for demographic purposes in better understanding those participating via selective response. Dr. Dennis graciously granted permission for modifying scale items for purposes of gleaning the perspective of a self-reflecting leader regarding servant leadership qualities. This was in contrast to the original instrument where subordinates reflected on their respective leader's servant leadership qualities. In replicating Dennis's original work, a Likert-type scale was assigned to those items measuring servant leadership constructs. As referenced earlier, participants were asked to indicate their degree of agreement of each item with *0 being total disagreement and 6 being the most agreement possible*.

#### **MSIP 5**

The researcher used the MSIP 5 as a tool for purposes of measuring organizational effectiveness. Calculated district APRs served as indicators determining how effective individual Missouri school districts were meeting established performance standards. The goals of the MSIP 5 are as follows:

- articulate state's expectations for student achievement;

- identify effectiveness of individual schools and respective districts;
- report yearly outcomes; and
- promote improvement and innovation (DESE, 2014, pp. 2).

Within each cycle of the MSIP are performance standards used to guide and qualify both individual schools and districts regarding their annual performance. These standards are designed strategically to recognize the success and continuous growth of all students, of all districts, as they prepare for the marketplace (DESE, 2014). The performance standards of the MSIP 5 consist of academic achievement, subgroup achievement, high school/college and career readiness, attendance rate, and graduation rate.

Performance standards may vary from district to district depending on their K-8 and K-12 status. Districts K-8 are not responsible for addressing the areas of college and career readiness, but rather high school readiness. Likewise, the graduation rate was also inapplicable in these situations. However, according to DESE (2014), K-12 school districts are responsible for all five performance standards.

**Measurement.** In order for the state to measure effectiveness and performance within the MSIP, an APR is calculated based upon a scoring rubric aligned with the current performance standards of the MSIP 5 (Appendix C). These reports are used for district accreditation and provide performance data to individual schools and charter local educational agencies (LEAs). The APR represents the percentage of total possible points earned. Earned APRs are key factors in determining a district's yearly accreditation status (Appendix G). In conjunction with this annual report, DESE submits a recommended accreditation classification to the State Board of Education based upon a district's last

three consecutive APRs. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education then communicates with the district the accreditation assigned by the state board, thus completing the accreditation process (DESE, 2014).

**Annual Performance Report.** For purposes of this study, the APR served as a dependent continuous variable pertinent in determining the relationship between servant leadership and organizational effectiveness. Annual Performance Reports of both public and charter schools were included in the data analysis. It was important to note that throughout the study, the researcher identified participants as district heads so as to avoid a repetitive list of titles. Actually, participants were not only superintendents, but also chief operating officers, chief executive officers, executive directors, heads of schools, administrators, and principals from public school districts and charter schools earning APRs falling in the top 15% or bottom 15% of the MSIP 5.

### **Subscales and Items**

The following is a breakdown of those items from the instrument and their respective constructs they measured (Dennis, 2004):

Agape Love - Items 2, 7, 17, 19, 21, 27

Altruism - Items 5, 9, 16, 18, 23, 26

Humility - Items 8, 12, 20, 22, 37, 39

Trust - Items 3, 10, 13, 30, 31, 41

Vision - Items 14, 32, 34, 36, 40, 42

Empowerment - Items 6, 11, 24, 25, 28, 33

Service - Items 1, 4, 15, 29, 35, 38.

Below are sample items excerpted from the instrument used in measuring said constructs:

### Agape Love

“I am genuinely interested in others.”

“I create a culture that fosters high standards of ethics.”

### Altruism

“I show unselfish regard for other’s well-being.”

“I have endured hardships (e.g., political and turf wars) to defend others.”

### Humility

“I talk more about employees’ accomplishments than my own.”

“I do not overestimate my merits.”

### Trust

“I trust others to keep secrets.”

“I show trustworthiness in others by being open to receive their input.”

### Vision

“I seek out other’s visions regarding the school district’s vision.”

“I encourage others to participate in determining and developing a shared vision.”

### Empowerment

“I show unselfish regard for other’s well-being.”

“I allow others to make decisions with increasing responsibility.”

### Service

“I see serving as a mission of responsibility to others.”

“I model service to inspire others.”

The SLAI (Appendix H) was unique as it assessed the theoretical framework of servant leadership amidst a myriad of populations (Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005). According to Dennis (2004), the SLAI could be used in assessing servant leadership from not only the perspective of the subordinate, but the leader as well (Dennis, 2004).

### **Validity and Reliability**

In the scale development process, it was made clear that the SLAI was intended to measure the seven constructs of Kathleen Patterson's (2003) theory of servant leadership. The item selection reflected specificity regarding constructs, they were examined for positive and negative content, and items were assigned reading levels ranging from fifth to seventh grade as recommended (Dennis, 2004).

In an effort to offer a greater magnitude of accuracy, a ratio scale was used in formatting measurement. It was believed that a scale with seven levels with *0* representing total disagreement and *6* representing the most agreement possible would assist respondents in conceptualizing the myriad of items (Dennis, 2004). A panel of experts was then chosen to assist in guiding the construction of the instrument items. The collective expertise of the three panel members consisted of extensive work regarding servant leadership constructs, teaching experiences, and journal publications within the field of leadership (Dennis, 2004). Experts were asked to

- determine the relevancy of each item and identify if it was actually measuring what it was meant to measure;
- evaluate each item, determining if the item applied to the construct;
- review items to ensure clarity and conciseness; and

- identify other possible phenomena not yet represented by existing items  
(Dennis, 2004, pp. 48-56).

Aligning with DeVellis's (2003) inclusion of validation items, Dennis (2004) included additional items within the initial scale to assist in determining the validity of his final scale. These additional items sought to detect flaws and to increase the construct validity of the scale. In an effort to further increase the reliability of the instrument, a minimum of 300 participants was selected representing a cross-section of the population in relation to age, education, and ethnicity (Dennis, 2004).

DeVellis (2003) suggested the more reliable individual items are, the more reliable the scale will become. Consequently, the evaluation of items became nearly as important as the item development (DeVellis, 2003). In Dennis's (2004) instrument development, the intercorrelation of items was established via a correlation matrix. To further its reliability, reverse scoring, item-scale correlations, item variances, item means, and coefficient alphas were all considered (Dennis, 2004). And, for an optimal scale length, items with a scale correlation of less than .5 were dropped due to their poor correlation with other scale items (Dennis, 2004).

In summary, this scale evolved from a pool of items derived from the review of Patterson's (2003) servant leadership theory. A jury of experts reviewed, deleted, added, and developed a questionnaire of items ultimately tested by a pool of participants chosen from a study response database. Factor analysis, correlation matrix, and scale reliability tests were used to validate items and determine which items would ensure a reliable scale (Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005).

The demographic items of the instrument assisted the researcher in better understanding each participant. Questions relating to faith, religious affiliation, age, gender, ethnicity, level of education, tenure in the district, tenure as district leader, and name of respective districts were all deemed as significant factors. These items were used in making group-level comparisons as they were deemed as potential factors affecting the practice and prevalence of servant leadership.

Despite only four of the seven constructs (e.g., agape love, humility, vision, and empowerment) possessing Cronbach's alpha ranging from .89 to .92, Dennis and Bocarnea (2005) suggested the SLAI indeed had the ability to measure Patterson's (2003) theory of servant leadership. Not only was it a valid and reliable measuring tool, but also the instrument was predicted to be a tool accessible for future self-identified servant leaders in measuring their own effectiveness (Dennis, 2004).

Supplementing the survey instrument, extant demographic data from DESE referencing a district's free and reduced rate, population, ethnicity, county, and geographical proximity (e.g., north, south, east, or west) were also included in the data analysis. These demographics assisted in differentiating districts from one another. They were suspect in affecting the practice and prevalence of servant leadership and also served as covariates in further analyses.

### **Data Collection**

As a purposive sampling, the survey instrument was distributed to 164 district heads within the state of Missouri. Participants were those within districts earning APRs numerically falling within the top or bottom 15% of the MSIP 5. District APRs, along

with other demographic data key to the study, were retrieved from DESE for the 2015-2016 school year.

The researcher obtained approval of the Research Review Board (RRB) prior to administration of the survey. As part of the ethics approval process, an e-mail was drafted outlining the purpose of the study and an incentive for those electing to participate involving the drawing of one \$100 gift card (Appendix I). A link to access the informed consent and survey instrument, using QuestionPro, was included in the e-mail.

The informed consent reassured those electing to participate that all Protected Personally Identifiable Information (PPII) generated through the study was to be maintained and preserved within the certified online survey software, QuestionPro. It was explained that unattended computers required files and software reflecting research data to be closed. The researcher indicated that developed master lists would be stored separately from the collected research data and destroyed following a 3-year period, after which its usefulness as research would have expired. Participants were reassured that all research data were stored in a password-protected computer and discarded in the same timely manner as created master lists. The only other individual said to have access to PPII was a doctoral advisor. Lastly, it was explained that there were no foreseeable risks associated with the study and those feeling uncomfortable while answering questions could skip questions or withdraw completely from the questionnaire at any time without penalty (Appendix J).

### **Data Analysis**

Throughout the data analysis, the researcher referred to SLAI and subscale scores of district heads and corresponding district APRs earned within the MSIP 5. The

researcher suggested that district heads depicting high SLAI and subscale scores would lead districts with commensurate APRs. In contrast, those district heads with low SLAI and subscale scores would lead districts with low APRs. The following hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) was measured using the Pearson correlation coefficient: There is a relationship between servant leadership and organizational effectiveness; hence, leaders with high servant leadership scores will lead districts with high APR scores.

The analysis continued measuring the statistical differences between the two categorical groups of district heads in districts earning APRs falling in the top 15% or bottom 15% of districts. An independent sample  $t$ -test was used to compare districts in the top versus bottom 15% on SLAI and subscale scores. SLAI and subscale scores from the independent sample  $t$ -tests assisted in addressing the following research questions:

1. How likely is it for a district head within a school district earning an APR in the top 15% to self-identify as a servant leader?
2. How likely is it for a district head within a school district earning an APR in the bottom 15% to self-identify as a servant leader?
3. From school districts earning APRs in the top 15%, what constructs of servant leadership are district heads more likely to practice?
4. From school districts earning APRs in the bottom 15%, what constructs of servant leadership are district heads more likely to practice?

In an effort to address demographic items, comparisons were made using one-way ANOVAs,  $t$ -tests, and correlations on SLAI and subscale scores as well as APRs. This analysis included demographic data whose sole purpose was to provide the researcher a better understanding of who was participating and to rule out influences associated with

specific demographic factors. The analyses assisted in answering the following research question:

5. What demographics are consistent with those district heads self-identifying as servant leaders?

### **Summary**

Chapter Three outlined the methodology used within a quantitative study of the relationship between SLAI scores and APRs. The process of establishing a viable and reliable instrument was also articulated. The survey instrument consisting of 51 scale items including the SLAI was introduced along with respective participants. The participants were those district heads in districts earning APRs within the top 15% or bottom 15% of the state's accountability system, the MSIP 5. The analysis utilized descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, *t*-tests, one-way ANOVAs, and logistic regression to provide insight into the prevalence and practice of servant leaders and organizational effectiveness as represented in APR scores.

Chapter Four will provide the results from the SLAI along with data from the correlation analysis, *t*-tests, and one-way ANOVAs. Chapter Five will include a summary of the purpose of the study, implications of the findings, and suggestions for future research.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to address the scarcity of empirical literature regarding the theory of servant leadership and its role in organizations. The field of leadership was fraught with conceptual frameworks lauding servant leadership; yet, the research was lacking empirically. This left the theory virtually underdefined (Andersen, 2009; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). The researcher sought to address this concern by investigating the theory of servant leadership and its relationship with organizational effectiveness.

The researcher hoped to contribute to the theory of servant leadership by analyzing its relationship with organizational effectiveness as it related to the earned APRs of school districts falling in the top and bottom 15% of the state of Missouri's accountability system. The study included a survey instrument consisting of 42 modified Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument (SLAI) items and eight demographic items instrumental in identifying servant leader practices of leaders represented within those districts. Modified SLAI items embodied by Dr. Kathleen Patterson's (2003) seven virtuous constructs of agape love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service assisted district heads in self-assessing their servant leader practices. Surveys were sent to 164 participants, including 82 in both the top and bottom 15% of districts. Participants from 61 school districts completed their survey, for a return rate of 37%.

## Study Design

Given the study's quantitative nature, analyses were conducted requiring the calculation of SLAI and subscale scores. These results coupled with the accompanying demographic data (e.g., survey demographics and extant data from DESE) were paramount while investigating servant leadership and its relationship to organizational effectiveness. Five research questions assisted the researcher in better understanding the data through the following three analyses: reliability analysis, hypothesis testing, and exploratory analysis. These analyses would ultimately be used in rejecting or failing to reject the null hypothesis stating there is no relationship between servant leadership and organizational effectiveness.

Research Questions 1-4 sought to determine the prevalence and practice of servant leadership of district heads in the top and bottom 15% of the state's accountability system. Independent sample *t*-tests were performed to identify the evidence of this significance respective to overall SLAI and subscale scores. This significance along with the statistical means assisted in determining the likelihood of SLAI and subscale scores in the top and bottom 15% of districts.

Research Question 5 sought to identify those demographics consistent with district heads self-identifying as servant leaders. The sole purpose of the demographic data was to better understand the sample participants. In exploratory analysis, one-way ANOVAs measured levels of significance comparing means on SLAI scores of groups by differing levels of demographic variables. In the same manner, through hypothesis testing, *t*-tests and correlations measured levels of significance and analyzed statistical means in an effort to identify those influences of selected demographic factors.

In further analyses, the demographic of percent of free and reduced lunch was of particular interest due to its historical relationship with poverty and low-performing schools (Griffin & Green, 2012; Petrilli & Wright, 2016). Partial correlations validated the influence of percentage of free and reduced lunch in relation to SLAI, subscale, and APR scores. The analysis showed a level of significance and negative high correlation between percentage of free and reduced lunch and APRs. There was no correlation between subscales and APRs when percentage of free and reduced lunch was included in the analyses as a covariate.

In this study, the researcher suspected those districts earning APRs in the bottom 15% of the state's accountability system would have higher percentages of free and reduced lunch. Logistic regression analysis allowed the researcher to measure the impact of percentage of free and reduced lunch on the top versus the bottom 15% of districts when included in a model with overall SLAI scores. Its appropriateness was validated given the dependent variable of APR being categorical with only two choices: the top and bottom 15% of the state's accountability system (Pallant, 2010).

To ensure the reliability and validity of the study, several disqualifications were required. In the case of a participant sending multiple submissions, the submission with the greater time indicated in QuestionPro (i.e., *Time Taken to Complete*) was deemed as the most accurate and included as part of the working data set. The remaining duplicate submissions were disqualified. Likewise, participants failing to provide district information inhibiting the comparisons of dependent and independent variables were also disqualified. Through this process, the sample emerged, statistical power was established, and the potential for data analysis was put into motion.

## Descriptive Statistics

### Participants

In Table 1, 88.5% indicated they were a person of faith with 9.8% indicating their uncertainty of faith or no faith at all.

Table 1

*Would You Consider Yourself a Person of Faith?*

	Frequency	Percent
Missing	1	1.6
No	5	8.2
Unsure	1	1.6
Yes	54	88.5
Total	61	100.0

In Table 2, 62.3% indicated they attended a religious organization at least once a week, 72.2% attended at least once a month, and 23% attended on either special occasions or never attended.

### Districts

District APRs had a symmetric and mesokurtic distribution with a mean of 88.19% (SD = 13.30%) and a mode of 100%. The APRs ranged from 53.80% to 100%. In relation to district populations, the sample represented quite a range with a minimum of 31 and maximum of 22,506 students. The median population of 505.5 was referenced given the data's positive skewness and leptokurtic distribution.

Table 2

*How Often Do You Attend Church, Synagogue, Mosque, or Other Religious Organization?*

	Frequency	Percent
Missing	3	4.9
Do not attend	7	11.5
Special occasions	7	11.5
Once a month	2	3.3
Twice a month	4	6.6
Once a week	29	47.5
Twice a week	9	14.8
Total	61	100.0

It was evident that the sample reflected a predominately White ethnicity; however, there were a few districts with larger numbers of Black and Hispanic students. The majority of districts indicated Asian and Indian student populations of suppressed sample sizes and in some cases, too few to even report. Those instances were reported in DESE’s Missouri Comprehensive Data System as asterisks within each school district’s summary report card.

Given district accreditations were determined by APRs, the researcher thought it only reasonable to include data referencing accreditation of participating districts. However, it was important to remember that DESE determines accreditation based upon a district’s 3-year earned APR average (Appendix G). The sample indicated within the 2015-2016 school year, 54 of the 61 school districts achieved a status of accreditation,

one a provisional status, and one was deemed as unaccredited. There were five districts whose accreditation status had not been calculated and were unavailable.

## **Findings**

### **Scale Reliability Analysis**

**Scale scores.** Sixty-one participants completed a survey instrument consisting of 42 modified items taken from Dennis's (2004) SLAI and accompanied by eight demographic items assisting in better understanding those participating. Items from the SLAI were measured on a 6-point Likert scale with *0 being total disagreement and 6 being most agreement possible* (Appendix H). For data analysis purposes within SPSS, SLAI items were labeled SLAI1, SLAI2,...SLAI42. Each participant earned an item score for each of the 42 SLAI items, all of which were then combined, creating a total scale score for each participant. The SLAI scale scores were calculated for each participant, representing a self-assessment of their practices aligning with Patterson's (2003) seven virtuous constructs of servant leadership.

The sample indicated scale scores had a symmetrical and mesokurtic distribution with a mean of 219.27 ( $SD = 14.73$ ). Scores ranged from 189 to 152. The scale's Cronbach's alpha was .918, indicating overall high internal consistency of scale items.

**Subscale scores.** Scale items and their respective scores were categorized into subscales reflecting Kathleen Patterson's (2003) seven virtuous constructs. Scores from items representing specific constructs were combined, creating subscale scores for each construct. The following are the scale items and the constructs they measured:

Agape Love - Items SLAI2, SLAI7, SLAI17, SLAI19, SLAI21, SLAI27

Altruism - Items SLAI5, SLAI9, SLAI16, SLAI18, SLAI23, SLAI26

Humility - Items SLAI8, SLAI12, SLAI20, SLAI22, SLAI37, SLAI39

Trust - Items SLAI3, SLAI10, SLAI13, SLAI30, SLAI31, SLAI41

Vision - Items SLAI14, SLAI32, SLAI34, SLAI36, SLAI40, SLAI42

Empowerment - Items SLAI6, SLAI11, SLAI24, SLAI25, SLAI28, SLAI33

Service - Items SLAI1, SLAI4, SLAI15, SLAI29, SLAI35, SLAI38.

Subscale scores were calculated for each participant represented in the sample.

***Agape love.*** The agape subscale revealed a symmetrical and mesokurtic distribution with a mean of 32.35 (SD = 2.50). Scores ranged from 26 to 36. The scale's Cronbach's alpha was .745, indicating internal consistency of its scale items.

***Altruism.*** The altruism subscale revealed a symmetrical and mesokurtic distribution with a mean of 31.36 (SD = 2.68). Scores ranged from 25 to 36. The scale's Cronbach's alpha was .686, nearing internal consistency of scale items.

***Humility.*** The humility subscale revealed a symmetrical and mesokurtic distribution with a mean of 32.62 (SD = 2.51). Scores ranged from 27 to 36. The scale's Cronbach's alpha was .691, nearing internal consistency of its scale items.

***Trust.*** The trust subscale was not only nearing negative skewness, but also it revealed a leptokurtic distribution with a mean of 28.25 (SD = 3.70). Scores ranged from 16 to 36. The scale's Cronbach's alpha was .630, indicating a lack of internal consistency of its scale items.

***Vision.*** The vision subscale revealed a symmetrical and nearly platykurtic distribution with a mean of 31.55 (SD = 3.04). Scores ranged from 25 to 36. The scale's Cronbach's alpha was .812, indicating high internal consistency of its scale items.

**Empowerment.** The empowerment subscale was similar to the vision subscale as it revealed a symmetrical and nearly platykurtic distribution with a mean of 32.19 (SD = 2.43). Scores ranged from 27 to 36. The scale's Cronbach's alpha was .787, indicating internal consistency of its scale items.

**Service.** Lastly, the service subscale revealed a symmetrical and mesokurtic distribution with a mean of 32.26 (SD = 2.90). Scores ranged from 25 to 36. The scale's Cronbach's alpha was .783, indicating internal consistency of its scale items.

### **Correlations of Scale and Subscales**

**Overall scale.** To further establish internal consistency, the researcher sought to measure the correlations between the overall scale and individual subscales and amongst the subscales themselves, respectively. The sample indicated a high positive correlation between the overall scale score and all by one subscale. The subscale of humility was deemed as moderately correlated ( $r = .599, p < .001$ ). The subscale of trust reflected the highest correlation with the overall scale ( $r = 8.17, p < .001$ ).

**Agape subscale.** The sample indicated a moderate positive correlation between the agape subscale and the subscales of altruism, humility, trust, vision, and service. It reflected a high positive correlation with the subscale of empowerment ( $r = .727, p < .001$ ). Its lowest correlation was with the subscale of humility ( $r = .366, p = .004$ ).

**Altruism subscale.** The sample indicated a moderate positive correlation between the altruism subscale and the subscales of agape, humility, trust, and empowerment while nearing a high positive correlation with vision and service. The highest positive correlation was with the subscale of service ( $r = .654, p < .001$ ). Its lowest was with the subscale of empowerment ( $r = .521, p < .001$ ).

**Humility subscale.** The sample indicated a moderate positive correlation between the subscale of humility and the subscales of altruism, trust, and empowerment. It reflected a low positive correlation with the subscales of agape, vision, and service. The highest positive correlation was with the subscale of altruism ( $r = .573, p < .001$ ). Its lowest correlation was with the subscale of vision ( $r = .283, p = .028$ ).

**Trust subscale.** The sample indicated a moderate positive correlation between the subscale of trust and the subscales of agape, altruism, humility, vision, empowerment, and service. The highest positive correlation was with the subscale of vision ( $r = .591, p < .001$ ). Its lowest was with the subscale of service ( $r = .389, p = .002$ ).

**Vision subscale.** The sample indicated a moderate positive correlation between the subscale of vision and the subscales of agape, altruism, trust, empowerment, and service. It reflected a low positive correlation with the subscale of humility ( $r = .283, p = .028$ ). The highest positive correlation was with the subscale of service ( $r = .638, p < .001$ ).

**Empowerment subscale.** The sample indicated a moderate positive correlation between the subscale of empowerment and the subscales of altruism, humility, trust, vision, and service. It reflected a high positive correlation with the subscale of agape ( $r = .727, p < .001$ ). The lowest positive correlation was with the subscale of humility ( $r = .410, p = .001$ ).

**Service subscale.** Lastly, the sample indicated a moderate positive correlation between the subscale of service and the subscales of agape, empowerment, and trust. It was also nearing a high positive correlation with altruism and vision and a low positive correlation with humility. The highest correlation was with the subscale of altruism ( $r =$

.654,  $p < .001$ ). Its lowest correlation was with the subscale of humility ( $r = .320$ ,  $p = .012$ ).

### **Hypothesis/Research Questions**

The null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) stated that there is no relationship between servant leadership and organizational effectiveness. In the correlational analysis, the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis due to the low negative correlation and absence of significance ( $r = -.073$ ,  $p = .608$ ). With respect to this sample, servant leadership had no relationship to organizational effectiveness.

**Research Questions 1-4.** In an effort to address the likelihood of a district head self-identifying as a servant leader, an independent sample  $t$ -test was implemented. The  $t$ -test allowed the researcher to compare district heads in the top and bottom 15% of districts on SLAI and subscale scores, indicating levels of servant leadership. Evidence of significance with respect to overall SLAI and subscale scores coupled with statistical means assisted in determining the likelihood of SLAI and subscale scores in the top and bottom 15% of districts.

From the independent sample  $t$ -test, equal variances assumed or not assumed had to be determined for the scale and subscales scores in order to move forward. Once this determination had been made, the researcher was then allowed to perform the appropriate  $t$ -test for equality of means allowing for the measuring of significance. The means of scale and subscale scores found in Table 3 were to determine the likelihood of higher SLAI scores or the prevalence of a given subscale reflected in the top or bottom 15% of districts.

Table 3

*Scale and Subscale Statistics of Those Participants in the Top and Bottom 15%*

		<i>N</i>	Mean	Standard Deviation
SLAI Score	Top 15%	27	220.63	12.15
	Bottom 15%	24	217.71	17.6
Agape Subscale Score	Top 15%	31	32.35	2.59
	Bottom 15%	28	32.36	2.50
Altruism Subscale Score	Top 15%	31	32.00	2.11
	Bottom 15%	26	30.62	3.20
Humility Subscale Score	Top 15%	32	33.03	2.39
	Bottom 15%	28	32.21	2.64
Trust Subscale Score	Top 15%	31	29.00	2.78
	Bottom 15%	27	27.33	4.47
Vision Subscale Score	Top 15%	31	32.00	3.02
	Bottom 15%	28	31.07	3.09
Empowerment Subscale Score	Top 15%	31	32.26	2.46
	Bottom 15%	27	32.11	2.49
Service Subscale Score	Top 15%	32	32.22	2.74
	Bottom 15%	28	32.29	3.17

The independent sample *t*-tests revealed that there were no differences between district heads at the top and bottom 15% on any of the scale and subscale scores. Essentially, an APR falling in the top or bottom 15% of the state's accountability system revealed no difference in how a district head scored on a particular servant leader construct, as represented by the subscales, or how they scored on the overall scale. In answering Research Questions 1 and 2, the district head was just as likely or just as unlikely to self-identify as a servant leader regardless of their districts earned APR,  $t(49) = -.696, p = .490, M_{top} = 220.63, M_{bottom} = 217.71$ .

Due to the absence of significance as indicated by *t*-tests, the researcher was unable to identify the prevalence of specific constructs within the top and bottom 15% of districts. However, the subscale of altruism was nearing significance. As it neared significance, the *t*-test indicated altruism as more likely prevalent in districts earning APRs falling in the top 15% than those in the bottom 15% of the state’s accountability system. Data analysis reflected the subscale of altruism approaching significance at  $t(55) = -1.975, p = .053, M_{top} = 32.00, M_{bottom} = 30.62$ .

**Research Question 5.** The researcher sought to identify those demographics that varied with servant leadership. Categorical variables included faith, church attendance, gender, ethnicity, and education. Continuous variables included age, years as district head, years in the district, and percentage of free and reduced lunch.

**Categorical variables.** One-way ANOVAs were conducted for both faith and church on SLAI. In Table 4, the data indicated no relationship between a participant self-identifying as a servant leader and whether they identified as a person of faith or how often they attended a house of worship.

Table 4

*Faith and Church Attendance*

			<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
SLAI Score	Faith	Between Groups	2	.930	.402
		Within Groups	48		
SLAI Score	Church Attendance	Between Groups	5	.806	.552
		Within Groups	43		

In the same manner, *t*-tests indicated no relationship between a participant self-identifying as servant leader and whether or not they were male or female,  $t(48) = -.847$ ,  $p = .401$ ,  $M_{male} = 218.41$ ,  $M_{female} = 222.11$ .

Regarding ethnicity, the sample was predominately White with only four of the 61 participants representing Black or African American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Hispanic or Latino, or Asian. This stifled further analysis of the relationship between ethnicity and other variables. Overall, the data indicated no relationship between a participant self-identifying as a servant leader and whether their level of education was a master's, specialist, or doctorate. However, in the subscale of altruism, the ANOVA measured  $F(2,51) = 3.017$ ,  $p = .058$ . The researcher felt this nearness to significance was worth mentioning due to the impact of the ordinal variable education on altruism. The analysis indicated that as the level of education increased, so did the practice of altruism by a district head. In Table 5, the data indicates those participants having doctorates were more likely to view themselves as altruistic than those with specialists or master's degrees.

Table 5

*Altruism and Education*

		<i>N</i>	Mean	Standard Deviation
Altruism Subscale	Master's	1	25.000	
	Specialist	24	31.250	2.817
	Doctorate	29	31.379	2.321
	Total	54	31.204	2.652

**Continuous variables.** A Pearson correlation coefficient measured those continuous variables of a participant’s age, years in district, years as district leader, and percentage of free and reduced lunch with SLAI and subscale scores. Its analysis revealed the absence of significance in all but one variable, the age of participants, with a low positive correlation to SLAI scores of  $r = .322, p = .023$ . In Table 6, the researcher took a closer look at the variable of age in how it correlated with the individual subscales.

Table 6

*Pearson Coefficient Correlation of Age and Subscales*

	Agape	Altruism	Humility	Trust	Vision	Empower	Service
Correlation	.390	.184	.159	.264	.163	.408	.159
Sig.	.002	.174	.228	.047	.220	.002	.230
N	58	56	59	57	58	57	59

Age was correlated with not only the SLAI scores, but it also revealed a low to moderate positive correlation with the subscales of agape ( $r = .390, p = .002$ ), trust ( $r = .264, p = .047$ ), and empowerment ( $r = .408, p = .002$ ). So as age increased, the likelihood of district heads practicing constructs of agape love, trust, and empowerment would also increase; thus, one’s SLAI score would increase.

The investigation continued as a partial correlation analysis between APRs, percentage of free and reduced, SLAI, and subscale scores was conducted. Correlations ranged from low negative .185 to a low positive .052, none of which were significant. However, the analysis indicated significance and nearing high negative correlation when APRs were compared with percentage of free and reduced ( $r = -.685, p < .001$ ). The percentage of free and reduced was then made a covariate to see what, if any, correlation

existed between APRs, SLAI, and subscale scores. Similar to *t*-tests, the analysis failed to show any relationship. In this sample, there was no correlation between any given subscale and a district's earned APR falling in the top and bottom 15% of districts when percentage of free and reduced lunch was included in the analyses as a covariate.

Given the percentage of free and reduced component and its inverse relationship to APRs, the researcher sought to further analyze this relationship with respect to SLAI scores. In this effort, logistic regression supplemented earlier *t*-tests with its predictive qualities addressing the top and bottom 15% of districts. When both percentage of free and reduced lunch and SLAI scores were included in a logistic regression model as seen in Table 7, only the percentage of free and reduced lunch made a significant contribution ( $\beta = -.151$ ). It functioned as a predictor of whether APRs were found in the top or bottom 15% of districts ( $\chi^2 (2) = 34.408, p < .001$ ). That is, the higher the district's percentage of free and reduced lunch, the less likely the district was to be in the top 15%. The overall SLAI score was shown not to be a significant predictor of top or bottom 15% ( $\beta = .024$ ).

Table 7

*Percentage of Free and Reduced Logistic Regression Model*

	Beta	df	Sig.
Percentage of Free and Reduced	-.151	1	.000
SLAI Scores	.024	1	.430

**Demographics**

The research involved a variety of demographic data, some derived via the survey instrument and other items extrapolated from DESE. In an effort to further address demographic scale items and their relationship to the top and bottom 15% of districts,

independent sample *t*-tests were again utilized. The researcher sought to answer the question of whether APRs were being influenced by certain demographics.

In Table 8, the following selected demographic items were categorized into the top and bottom 15% along with their respective means: percentage of free and reduced, district population, years in the current district, years as district head, and age. The independent sample *t*-test revealed that the sample lacked significant differences in these demographics areas. While these analyses lacked significance in many areas, it confirmed the obvious, the percentage of free and reduced demographic had significance in relation to a district's earned APR.

Table 8

*District's and District Leader's Demographic Statistics in the Top and Bottom 15%*

	Top or Bottom 15%	<i>N</i>	Mean	Standard Deviation
Percent of Free and Reduced	Top 15%	32	44.56	15.99
	Bottom 15%	28	74.10	16.49
District Population	Top 15%	31	1521.88	3319.63
	Bottom 15%	28	2206.25	4457.05
How many years have you been in the current district?	Top 15%	31	8.68	7.90
	Bottom 15%	26	9.00	7.35
How many years have you been the district head?	Top 15%	32	13.45	8.37
	Bottom 15%	28	12.92	7.02
What is your age?	Top 15%	31	48.47	8.45
	Bottom 15%	27	50.54	8.02

The data showed a higher percentage of free and reduced lunch falling in the districts in the bottom 15% than those falling in the districts in the top 15%. Data analysis reflected the demographic of percentage of free and reduced lunch with significance at

$t(58) = 7.036, p < .001, M_{top} = 44.56, M_{bottom} = 74.10$ . The remaining demographics of district population, years in the current district, years as district head, and age failed to show any significant relationship to APRs. There was a high negative correlation indicating an inverse relationship between district's percentage of free and reduced lunch and their earned APRs. As the percentage of free and reduced lunch increased, districts were more likely to reflect a lower APR for the given school year.

In the area of education, with nearly an even distribution among the means of those earning a specialist and those earning a doctorate, the chi-squared test measured a lack of significance as  $\chi^2(3) = 3.539, p = .316$ . There was no relationship between the participant's education and a district's earned APR.

### **Summary**

Chapter Four provided the results from the analysis of the SLAI along with data from the correlation analysis,  $t$ -tests, and one-way ANOVAs using APRs and top versus bottom 15% as dependent variables. Correlations were examined among overall SLAI scores, subscale scores, APRs, and selected demographics. Logistic regression, partial correlations, and chi-square tests supplemented previous data analyses addressing hypotheses and stated research questions. Chapter Five will include a summary of the purpose of the study, implications of the findings, and suggestions for future research.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Introduction**

This quantitative study sought to determine the relationship between servant leadership and organizational effectiveness. Within the study, servant leadership was embodied and ultimately measured by Dr. Kathleen Patterson's (2003) seven virtuous constructs of agape love, altruism, honesty, vision, trust, empowerment, and service. These constructs were birthed from the *Beatitudes* referenced within the book of Matthew found in the ancient texts of the Bible. The study included a survey instrument developed by Dr. Robert Dennis (2004) designed specifically for purpose of measuring Patterson's seven virtuous constructs. The instrument was better known as the Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument (SLAI) containing scale items that defined subscales, which ultimately were used to measure Patterson's virtuous constructs of servant leadership.

For the purpose of this study, organizational effectiveness was an accountability measure within the public schools sector of the state of Missouri. The state's accountability system, the MSIP 5, outlined how organizational effectiveness was to be measured. A set of five criteria was established in 1990 and was used to ultimately determine each district's accreditation status. As districts met criteria expectations, points were accumulated and awarded, creating a total points earned out of total points possible. This value became known as a district's Annual Performance Report (APR). The accreditation of school districts was determined by averaging the three most recent years' earned APRs.

As referenced above, the survey instrument used in this study consisted of Dennis's (2004) 42 SLAI items supplemented by eight demographic items for purposes of better understanding the sample participants. The SLAI items were modified in an effort to create an instrument in which participants were able to self-assess their practice of servant leadership. From this instrument, total SLAI and subscale scores were calculated. A select group of demographic data was chosen, providing a better understanding of participants and ruling out influences associated with specific demographic factors during analyses.

Demographics were descriptive in nature as they characterized not only participants, but their respective districts as well. The data was interpreted using a combination of the following testing and analyses: independent sample t-testing, Pearson coefficient correlations, logistic regression, descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alphas, one-way ANOVAs, and partial correlations. Following the interpretation of data, levels of significance were measured and relationships and correlations were determined.

The following research questions were developed in hopes of better understanding the prevalence and practice of servant leadership:

1. How likely is it for a district head within a school district earning an APR in the top 15% to self-identify as a servant leader?
2. How likely is it for a district head within a school district earning an APR in the bottom 15% to self-identify as a servant leader?
3. From school districts earning APRs in the top 15%, what constructs of servant leadership are district heads more likely to practice?

4. From school districts earning APRs in the bottom 15%, what constructs of servant leadership are district heads more likely to practice?
5. What demographics are consistent with those district heads self-identifying as servant leaders?

Lastly, the null hypothesis proposed there to be no relationship between servant leadership and organizational effectiveness.

### **Methods**

The researcher sent participation invites, via QuestionPro, to 164 district heads (e.g., superintendents, chief operating officers, chief executive officers, executive directors, heads of school, administrators, or principals) within the state of Missouri. The invite was simply an invitation to participate in completing a 51-item survey. Those completing the survey were entered into a raffle in hopes of winning a \$100 VISA gift card.

All Protected Personally Identifiable Information (PPII) generated through this study was maintained and preserved within the certified online survey software QuestionPro. Unattended computers required files and software reflecting research data to be closed. Developed master lists were stored separately from the collected research data and destroyed following a 3-year period, after which its usefulness as research would have expired. All research data were stored in a password-protected computer and discarded in the same timely manner as created master lists. The only other individual with access to PPII was the researcher's doctoral advisor.

Of the 164 invites, 82 were from districts earning APRs falling within the top 15% and the other 82 were from districts earning APRs falling in the bottom 15% of the

state's accountability system. Sixty-one out of the 164, 37%, responded by completing the survey instrument facilitated through QuestionPro. Data were collected on surveys, submitted by participants, and downloaded into SPSS. This allowed for the organizing of data for purposes of expediting analyses. The analysis involved identifying data numerically and categorically to address the research questions. Relationships among the variables of SLAI, APRs and demographics were investigated using correlations, *t*-tests, one-way ANOVAs, and logistic regression.

## **Summary of Findings**

### **Descriptive**

The sample was predominately White and of those sampled, there were twice as many males as there were females. Over 90% of participants had obtained a degree beyond a master's. Their tenure as district leaders ranged from 1 to 35 years, 54 of the 61 considered themselves people of faith, and more than half attended a religious service about once a week.

Student populations in districts ranged from 31 to 22,506 students. There existed a very small number of Black, Hispanic, and Asian students within the districts of the sample, so suppressed, ethnic populations in some districts were left unreported. Similar to faith, 54 of the 61 school districts were accredited.

### **Analysis**

Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument and subscale scores were derived through a culmination of item scores as SLAI items were measured on a 6-point Likert scale with *0 being total disagreement possible and 6 being most agreement possible*. Scale scores were calculated creating a total SLAI score accompanied by total subscale

scores for each of the seven constructs of servant leadership. There was an overall high internal consistency of SLAI items with a Cronbach's alpha of .918. The SLAI also depicted a high positive correlation with all but one subscale, the humility subscale, deemed moderately correlated. These moderate to high correlations were significant as they gave credence and credibility to Patterson's (2003) seven virtuous constructs in their ability to reflect an internal consistency. This provided legitimacy to the SLAI with respect to the sample population.

The researcher was unable to reject the null hypothesis, thus confirming the absence of statistical significance in relation to servant leadership with organizational effectiveness. Research Questions 1 through 4 tested the relationship between overall SLAI scores and organizational effectiveness as represented by a district's earned APRs. Through independent sample *t*-tests the data indicated no significant differences existed on SLAI scores and subscale scores in the top and bottom 15% of districts with respect to APR scores. The analyses simply indicated there was no statistically significant relationship between participant SLAI and subscales scores and their district's earned APRs within this sample.

The subscale of altruism indicated the only slight indication of relationship. With a  $p = .053$ , the means indicated a trend toward higher APR districts having higher levels of altruism in their leaders. The researcher referenced those participants in districts having earned APRs in the top 15% of districts as being more likely to practice altruism than those in the bottom 15%.

It was the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch that ended up being the driving force of APRs. Historically, those school districts falling in bottom 15%

of the state's accountability system would more likely have a higher percentage of free and reduced lunch student population. The analysis continued with logistic regressions and partial correlations confirming the relationship between percentage of free and reduced lunch and APRs, yet failing to indicate a relationship between SLAI scores, subscale scores, and APRs.

Demographics were divided into two groups of categorical and continuous factors. In an effort to address demographic scale items and their multiple response levels, comparisons were made using the one-way ANOVAs, *t*-tests, and Pearson coefficient correlations. The data analysis was performed with the sole purpose of providing the researcher a better understanding of who was participating and to rule out influences associated with specific demographic scale items. Research Question 5 sought to identify those demographic items consistent with district heads self-identifying as servant leaders. Of all the factors, age was the only demographic that indicated a level of statistical significance with the SLAI score. It depicted a positive correlation with the SLAI score, and also depicted a positive correlation with the subscales of agape, trust, and empowerment. The analysis indicated the older district heads using more agape, trust, and empowerment with their staff. There may be wisdom behind the practice of these constructs and this wisdom is a derivative of age. Or, particular constructs may be more likely to occur with those that are older.

In the same manner, the researcher sought to identify selected district-level demographics relating to APRs. Of those selected demographics, the percentage of free and reduced depicted a strong relationship with districts' earned APRs. This was to be expected given the percentage of free and reduced association with low-performing

schools. Poverty negatively impacts APRs over and above any leadership style that a district head may have. Perhaps addressing poverty issues would free district heads to exercise more servant leadership.

### **Connections to Literature**

As earlier referenced, the SLAI items embodied Patterson's (2003) seven virtuous constructs. They were conceptualized as a collection of values. Those values were to support, recognize, and unleash the uniqueness and creativity of each individual (Babakus et al., 2011; Jaramillo et al., 2009; Patterson, 2003; Rieke et al., 2008). These constructs were to equip the servant leader with a teachable spirit, empathy for others, a life of discipline, a concern for the organization, and desire for mercy (Parris & Peachey, 2013). Patterson (2003) recognized that servant leaders considered the needs of their followers as priority. Each subordinate was viewed as a whole person having needs, wants, and desires.

The servant leader constructs referenced in this study were deemed as powerful: showing love and compassion for others, preferring one another, responding in humility, exemplifying trust towards others, possessing and sharing a vision, empowering others in reaching their potential, and addressing others with a servant's heart. These particular qualities and characteristics are highly sought after within organizations. However, such characteristics are often much easier to imagine than to actually put into practice.

The uniqueness of servant leadership has been promoted in many of the top scholastic institutions of our day (Parris & Peachey, 2013). Its highly sought after character traits may have caused one to conclude that organizational effectiveness requires the implementation of servant leadership. In this light, the researcher recognized

the potential of exacerbating the limitations of open and honest responses when collecting data via a quantitative method. However, the intent was not to imply a level of deception from participant responses, but rather to understand the legitimacy of all leaders in their desire to align with leadership practices that are widely accepted and deemed as best practices. The researcher viewed this mantra as unique to this study and a powerful reminder of the influences of the servant leadership paradigm.

Servant leadership has been referred to as the spiritual paradigm. It was Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) who emphasized the constructs of servant leadership possessing spiritual connotations (Striepe et al., 2014). Whetstone (2001) actually defined the servant leader as possessing virtuous qualities emanating from one's character, emerging internally as if spiritual. He went as far as to attribute a spiritual quality as an underlying premise for its utilization. Patterson (2003) propagated this same message by identifying servant leadership as seven virtuous constructs comparable to the *Beatitudes* found within the book of Matthew of the Bible. Surprisingly, the ANOVA analysis determined that church attendance and one identifying as a person of faith had absolutely no relationship with an individual self-identifying as a servant leader. The results defied all spiritual accolades allotted to servant leadership within the literature. The researcher sought to understand if the study's limitations were responsible for such an outcome.

Frick (2016) referenced that regardless of Judeo-Christian influences and/or daily religious practices, one may or may not be predisposed to have a servant leader mantra depending on their genetic makeup. However, the analyses did depict a low to moderate correlation between age and SLAI scores. Thus, a certain age may exist at which a district head may be predisposed to embracing servant leadership practices.

In defining the subscale of altruism, the literature detailed the selflessness of one possessing this quality. Altruism compelled one to assist another just for the sake of helping (DeYoung, 2000; Kaplan, 2000). Arjoon (2000) concurred, describing the altruistic leader as one with a desire to act in an appropriate manner. There was no extrinsic motive, just a naturally occurring desire to meet others' needs. According to Kaplan (2000), altruism occurred despite the sacrifice or risk associated with meeting the needs of others, ignoring personal interests in an effort to benefit those they lead. Altruism was imperative to the mentality of a leader consistently seeking to fulfill the needs of others (Patterson, 2003; Shaw & Newton, 2014). In the study, altruism neared significance in relation to APRs. The analysis further indicated that those district leaders in the top 15% of the state's accountability system were more likely to embrace altruism than those in the bottom 15%.

### **Strengths and Limitations/Delimitations**

This particular survey instrument provided an initial overall  $\alpha$  with high Cronbach's alphas in individual constructs (Dennis, 2004). This was prior to the modifications required to change the scale from a subordinate-report scale into a self-reporting scale by district heads. Following the modifications, the instrument maintained its internal consistency with overall consistency of SLAI items with Cronbach's alpha of .918. This was a strength during research. The SLAI also depicted a high positive correlation with all but one subscale, the humility subscale, which was deemed moderately correlated.

The researcher pondered the limitation of open and honest responses from participants. Mean SLAI scores of  $M = 219.27$  ( $SD = 14.73$ ), with one participant scoring

a perfect 252, could not have been predicted. Subscale scores followed suit with all but one having a mean of 32 out of a potential maximum score of 36 points. A participant had the potential of scoring a 252 for a SLAI score and a 36 on any given subscale. The descriptive statistics indicated a strong sampling of servant leadership.

From the beginning, the researcher believed in the potential of self-assessing one's practice of servant leadership. However, those challenges associated with a quantitative approach of ensuring valid and reliable survey responses could not be discounted. The hope was that those participating had the capacity to self-assess in a genuine and transparent manner, providing responses accurately reflecting their current practices of servant leadership. The sample depicted an overwhelming response favoring the seven virtuous constructs of servant leadership. As a self-identified servant leader, the researcher's limitation of maintaining an unbiased perspective actually became a strength as the analyses unfolded. It was surprisingly gratifying to actually observe the data telling the story.

The delimitations outlined in the first chapter appeared to be of little significance throughout the research. Given the MSIP 5 was touted as the state's accountability system in determining district's APRs, the researcher determined not to include district heads from other states. The researcher saw the analysis of the top and bottom 15% of the state's accountability system as strategic but was disappointed in the response rate of those who received participation invites. The sample was merely sufficient for analyses and a larger sample size would have been preferred. Lastly, a cache of empirical literature would have benefited the research process, given the plethora of theoretical and conceptual literature available with regard to servant leadership.

## Conclusions

The data analysis led the researcher to the conclusion that there was no relationship between servant leadership and organizational effectiveness. The researcher failed in attempts to reject the null hypothesis. Despite the SLAI with high internal consistency amongst its scale items and moderate positive correlations between its individual subscales, the data analysis did not indicate any correlation or relationship between SLAI and subscale scores and APRs. In the end, the demographics of age and percentage of free and reduced were the only two factors throughout the study that indicated any correlation or relationship with SLAI scores and APRs respectively.

The participant response rate was suppressed due to district heads failing to respond to the participation invite. Despite the poor response, there were enough participants to create statistical power. The researcher communicated on three different occasions, with 1 week in between, in an attempt to fulfill a goal of 100% participation. After three attempts, the researcher had only achieved a 37% participation rate. Thankfully it was a large enough sample for statistical significance.

The researcher had not anticipated the overwhelming response indicating the prevalence and practice of servant leadership as embodied by Patterson's (2003) seven virtuous constructs within the sample. The analysis begged a myriad of interpretations regarding the prevalence and practice of servant leadership...servant leadership may be a life-long process coming to fruition as one grows older; it may be the pinnacle that all seek to attain possessing leadership skills widely accepted and deemed as best practices within the field of leadership; or, it may be a paradigm that is alive and well reflected by a remnant of districts in the state of Missouri.

While the prevalence and practice of servant leadership were unanticipated, a change in methodology may have drastically altered this research. By leaving the survey instrument unmodified and surveying only those directly subordinate to district heads, it may have stifled any bias, thus, further impacting SLAI and subscales scores. This would have allotted subordinates the opportunity to complete an unmodified SLAI referencing their superior's servant leader practices as originally intended.

### **Professional Implications**

This study was to measure the relationship of servant leadership with organizational effectiveness. Despite the study's inability to show a relation, Patterson's (2003) seven virtuous constructs undeniably embody those qualities and characteristics found in best practices. The constructs of agape love, altruism, humility, trust, vision, empowerment, and service may very well be traits developed over time, ultimately creating a seasoned leader lacking insecurities and endowed with a servant's heart.

The positive correlation of age with SLAI was a reminder of the process required in understanding how to serve others. Successful leaders can be found at any age; however, with age comes a maturity that will often shape one's perceptions of the needs of those around them. It is this maturity that may very well become the catalyst for becoming a servant leader. This study illustrated the desire of leaders in aligning themselves with servant leader practices. It is a leadership paradigm that is relevant in a culture that longs for leadership that seeks to understand before being understood (Covey, 2004).

In an organization's attempt to be effective, its leaders must also always be cognizant of those factors out of their control. In this study, the percentage of free and

reduced lunch epitomized this lack of control and was synonymous with organizational ineffectiveness in relation to districts earned APRs. It's understood...the effects of poverty on student success. However, concessions are often nonexistent when measuring organizational effectiveness in the shadows of poverty. Organizational effectiveness must be viewed as larger than a calculated APR. It is a disservice to overlook the limitations of success when faced with the realities of poverty.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The analysis was uneventful as the only relationships established were the demographics of age on SLAI scores and the percentage of free and reduced lunch on APR scores. The age of participants and their correlation with SLAI scores was of interest to the researcher. The analysis indicated that as one's age increased, so did SLAI scores. This could imply that younger leaders were incapable or lacked the capacity of functioning as a servant leader. One must conclude there may be an age in which leaders become proponents in trusting, loving, and empowering those they serve.

The researcher recommends a further investigation into the factors behind the level of significance with regard to the age of participants. This demographic of age appeared to be the only factor with a level of significance indicating any correlation with the SLAI scale. It also showed a correlation with the three subscales of agape, trust, and empowerment. The Pearson correlation coefficient indicated low to moderate positive correlation with both the SLAI scale and three subscales. The researcher found this to be worth further investigation to better understand the positive correlation of age on SLAI scales in future research.

The researcher suggests rethinking the appropriateness of the survey instrument, in its modified state, in creating an atmosphere of open and honest self-assessment in the practice of servant leadership. The motive was to simply create an instrument, measuring servant leadership, where transparency flourished as one participated in self-reflection. Until further appropriate modifications can be made to the SLAI with regard to self-assessment, the researcher would encourage the continued use of the SLAI in its original state and for its original purpose. It possesses a validity and reliability that has been well established. The researcher would encourage the continued use of the SLAI for measuring servant leadership not only in the educational sector, but also in the private sector as well.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this research was to measure the relationship between servant leadership and organizational effectiveness. In addition to this measure, the study was to assist in identifying self-proclaimed servant leaders and their respective practices. This study involved analyzing those districts in the state of Missouri earning APRs falling in the top and bottom 15% of the state's accountability system. Along with the relationship between servant leadership and APRs, the researcher also investigated relationships demographic influences had on SLAI, subscale scores, and APRs. Through this study, the researcher hoped to add to the current educational knowledge base regarding the legitimacy and the viability of servant leadership in relation to best practices for future aspiring leaders.

Despite the researcher's inability to reject the null hypothesis, the following three contributions surfaced as a result of this study:

1. The SLAI is not an effective self-reporting measure.
2. The percentage of free and reduced lunch is a strong determinant of APRs and can overshadow other demographics and the leadership capabilities of district heads. It was the only factor in the study showing correlation with significance in relation to APRs.
3. Age may be related to SLAI and subscale scores, such that older leaders are more likely to practice servant leadership than younger leaders. It was the only factor in the study showing correlation with significance in relation to SLAI scores.

As a self-identified servant leader, the researcher understands servant leadership may not be for everyone. The fact is, leadership means different things to different people (Hannon, 2017). The researcher would like to leave those considering servant leadership one last thought by the German theologian, Albert Schweitzer: “I don’t know what your destiny will be, but one thing I do know: the only ones among you who will truly be happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve others.” (“Albert Schweitzer Quotes,” n.d., para. 1).

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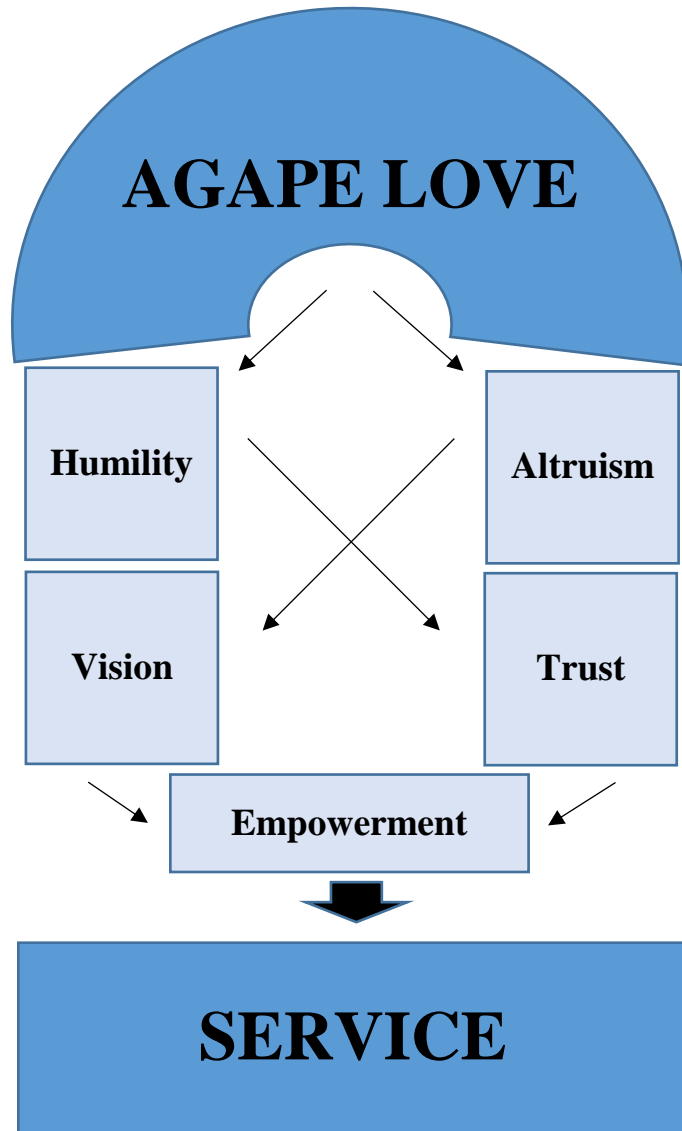
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Appendix A

Dr. Kathleen Patterson's Model of Servant Leadership



Appendix B

Missouri School Improvement Plan Cycles



## Appendix C

### The MSIP 5 Performance Standards and Allotted Points Possible

<b>Standard 1: Academic Achievement</b>	<b>English Language Arts</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>	<b>Social Studies</b>
<i>Possible Points</i>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>8</b>

<b>Standard 2: Subgroup Achievement</b>	<b>English Language Arts</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>	<b>Social Studies</b>
<i>Possible Points</i>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>Standard 3: College &amp; Career Readiness (K-12)</b>	<b>Indicators 1-3</b>	<b>Indicator 4</b>	<b>Indicator 5-6</b>	
<i>Possible Points</i>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	

<b>Standard 3: High School Readiness (K-8)</b>				
<i>Possible Points</i>	<b>10</b>			

<b>Standard 4: Attendance Rate</b>	
<i>Possible Points</i>	<b>10</b>

<b>Standard 5: Graduation Rate</b>	
<i>Possible Points</i>	<b>10</b>

## Appendix D

### Correspondence Granting Request in Using the Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument

Sun 7/23/2017 3:36 PM

Permission to use instrument - Slater\_Kirk\_Southwest Baptist Univ\_July\_2017

**Dear Kirk Slater,**

Yes, you have permission to use the SLAI for your research.

I received your message for using the SLAI instrument. You may use it for your research, and slightly modify it for your use (i.e., change organization & company to group) if needed.

Send an abstract/synopsis of expected use of the instrument, in addition to the modified instrument you plan to use (if applicable). {Completed.}

Please send me a copy of finished work (or article publication/draft).

Enclosed are:

Updated Instrument – SLAI; URL address, if applicable (most requests use paper forms), and factor breakdown for coding.

Blessings,

Rob Dennis, Ph.D.

Appendix E

Correspondence to Dr. Dennis from Dr. Bocarnea, a Fellow Colleague and Co-Author

Springfield Public Schools  
Hillcrest High  
Sun 7/23/2017 3:32 PM

Dr. Dennis,  
Please see below Kirk Slater's request.  
Thank you.

Mihai C. Bocarnea, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor, School of Business & Leadership  
Regent University  
phone: (757) 352-4726, fax: (757) 352-4634  
1000 Regent University Drive, CRB 242; Virginia Beach, VA 23464

## Appendix F

### Correspondence Requesting Dr. Dennis's Contact Information

**From:** Slater, Kirk [<mailto:kslater@spsmail.org>]  
**Sent:** Saturday, July 22, 2017 5:54 PM  
**To:** Mihai Bocarnea  
**Subject:** Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument

Dr. Bocarnea,

My name is Kirk Slater and I am a doctoral candidate at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, MO. I am corresponding with you in hopes of securing accurate contact information for one of your fellow colleagues and associates, Dr. Dennis. I had recently sent him a correspondence at the following email address, 'dennis.robert@lycos.com', and fear my attempts have failed due to incorrect information. My purpose was to attain his permission in using the SLAI for my dissertation.

I have finished my coursework and comprehensive exam, currently holding the status of ABD. I am approximately half way through my dissertational journey and nearing the research component. My dissertation, obviously, is in regards to servant leadership. I am wanting to study the relationship between servant leadership and organizational effectiveness. I am measuring organizational effectiveness through Annual Performance Reports "APRs" (a type of grade card) issued by the state's accountability system for all districts in the state of Missouri. I am wanting to measure the correlation between those APRs and district heads (within those districts) self-identifying as servant leaders. If not self-identifying, at least measuring the prevalence of the various servant leadership constructs depicted in their respective leadership paradigms as derived from Patterson's theory of servant leadership.

I understand that the SLAI was designed for subordinates to assess their leaders and their servant leader tendencies; however, could the instrument be adjusted enabling a leader to assess themselves? In my case (study), a district head would be self-assessing with the SLAI. This was referenced on pg. 107 of Dr. Dennis's dissertation..."designing the instrument for the leader to assess his or her perception of these factors for servant leadership and comparing them with the employees' survey." Again, in my study there would be no employees' surveyed, just the district heads.

Suffice it to say, I am new to this process and was hoping you could assist me in this endeavor. I am personally a self-identified servant leader and most importantly a follower of Christ. Any assistance would be greatly appreciated and an answer to prayer. I know the good Lord has laid this topic on my heart and I am convinced He will give me the strength and direction to see it to completion! Dr. Bocarnea, thank you in advance for your help!!

*Kirk Slater*

## Appendix G

### Types of Accreditation Based Upon Total Points Earned



## Appendix H

### Servant Leadership Questionnaire

1. Are you a superintendent, chief operating officer, chief executive officer, executive director, head of school, administrator, or principal?

Yes

No

**Indicate the degree of agreement you have with each of the following statements. “0” is total disagreement and “6” is most agreement possible.**

2. I see serving as a mission of responsibility to others.

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

3. I am genuinely interested in others.

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

4. I trust others to keep secrets.

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

5. I model service to inspire others.

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

6. I show unselfish regard for other’s wellbeing.

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

7. I desire to develop other’s leadership potential.

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

8. I create a culture that fosters high standards of ethics.

0     1     2     3     4     5     6

9. I talk more about employees' accomplishments than my own.

0     1     2     3     4     5     6

10. I have endured hardships (e.g. political and "turf" wars) to defend others.

0     1     2     3     4     5     6

11. I show trustworthiness in others by being open to receive their input.

0     1     2     3     4     5     6

12. I allow others to make decisions with increasing responsibility.

0     1     2     3     4     5     6

13. I do not overestimate my merits.

0     1     2     3     4     5     6

14. I increase commitment to the school district by the level of trust I place in others.

0     1     2     3     4     5     6

15. I seek out other's vision regarding the school district's vision.

0     1     2     3     4     5     6

16. I understand that serving others is most important.

0     1     2     3     4     5     6

17. I voluntarily give of myself expecting nothing in return.

0     1     2     3     4     5     6

18. I show my care for others by encouraging them.

0     1     2     3     4     5     6

19. I give of myself with no ulterior motives.

0     1     2     3     4     5     6

20. I have shown compassion in my actions towards others.

0     1     2     3     4     5     6

21. I am not interested in self-glorification.

0     1     2     3     4     5     6

22. I make others feel important.

0     1     2     3     4     5     6

23. I am humble enough to consult others in the school district when I do not have all the answers.

0     1     2     3     4     5     6

24. I have made personal sacrifice(s) for others.

0     1     2     3     4     5     6

25. I give others the authority they need to do their job.

0     1     2     3     4     5     6

26. I turn over some control to others so that they may accept more responsibility.

0     1     2     3     4     5     6

27. I have made sacrifices in helping others.

0     1     2     3     4     5     6

28. I show concern for others.

0     1     2     3     4     5     6

29. I empower others with opportunities to develop their skills.

0     1     2     3     4     5     6

30. I understand that service is the core of leadership.

0     1     2     3     4     5     6

31. I communicate trust to others.

0     1     2     3     4     5     6

32. I seek to instill trust rather than fear or insecurity.

0     1     2     3     4     5     6

33. I encourage others to participate in determining and developing a shared vision.

0     1     2     3     4     5     6

34. I entrust others to make decisions.

0     1     2     3     4     5     6

35. I work with others in writing a clear and concise vision statement for our school district.

0       1       2       3       4       5       6

36. I aspire not to be served but to serve others.

0       1       2       3       4       5       6

37. I have asked others what they think the future direction of our school district should be.

0       1       2       3       4       5       6

38. I do not center attention on my own accomplishments.

0       1       2       3       4       5       6

39. I model service in my behaviors, attitudes, or values.

0       1       2       3       4       5       6

40. My demeanor is one of humility.

0       1       2       3       4       5       6

41. I want to include other's vision into the school district's goals and objectives.

0       1       2       3       4       5       6

42. I know others are above corruption.

0       1       2       3       4       5       6

43. I seek the commitment of others concerning the shared vision of our school district.

0       1       2       3       4       5       6

**Please describe yourself by answering the following questions.**

44. Would you consider yourself a person of faith?

Yes       No       Unsure

45. How often do you attend a church, synagogue, mosque, or other religious organization?

Twice a Week       Once a Week       Twice a Month       Once a Month       Special Occasions       Do Not Attend

46. What is your age?

47. What is your gender?

Male       Female

48. What is your ethnicity (race)?

White       Black or African American       American Indian or Alaskan Native       Hispanic or Latino       Asian       Other

49. What is your highest level of education?

Masters       Specialist       Doctorate

50. How many years have you been in the district?

51. How many years have you been superintendent, chief operating officer, chief executive officer, executive director, head of school, administrator, or principal?

## Appendix I

### Recruiting Material

From: Kirk Slater  
To: District heads in the State of Missouri  
Subject: Survey of Servant Leadership

Dear Colleagues,

My name is Kirk Slater and I am a doctoral student at Southwest Baptist University. As part of my research, I am asking for 7-8 minutes of your time to complete a questionnaire regarding the relationship between servant leadership and organizational effectiveness within school districts across the state of Missouri.

Because your time is valuable, I will be including your name in a drawing for a \$100 Visa gift card for participating. Those responding within the first week will be entered twice, doubling their chances.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this project. However, if you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you may withdraw from the survey at any point. Thank you very much for your support and understanding of this doctoral endeavor.

Following the completion of my research, results will be available for reading at <http://www.sbuniv.edu> (University Libraries, Graduate Education Ed.D. Dissertations). I will be happy to field any inquiries you may have and can be contacted at [k Slater@spsmail.org](mailto:k Slater@spsmail.org). We have contracted with QuestionPro, an independent research firm, to field your confidential survey responses. Please click on this link to start the survey:

<https://servinginleadership.questionpro.com>

Thank you for your consideration!!

Kirk Slater  
Assistant Principal  
Hillcrest High School  
Springfield, MO

## Appendix J

### Informed Consent Document

#### Servant Leadership and Its Relationship to Organizational Effectiveness

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between servant leadership and organizational effectiveness. My hope is that this investigation will provide informative insight regarding future best practices associated with the theory of servant leadership within school districts across the state of Missouri. Your involvement in this endeavor is invaluable and your consideration is greatly appreciated!

I understand that your participation is completely voluntary. The survey will take 7-8 minutes and your responses will be kept in complete confidence. Only those directly involved with the survey will have access to your responses (e.g. myself and a faculty advisor). While there are no foreseeable risks associated with this project, you may withdraw from the survey at any point without penalty. In appreciation for your time and consideration, you will be entered into a drawing for a \$100 Visa gift card.

If at any time during this survey you feel that your rights have been violated, you may contact Martaun Stockstill, chair of the Research Review Board, at 417-328-2089 or [mstockstill@SBUuniv.edu](mailto:mstockstill@SBUuniv.edu).

By checking the box below, I acknowledge that I have read and understand the above information and hereby give my consent to participate in this survey. My agreement is not a waiver of any legal rights.



**THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED BY THE SOUTHWEST BAPTIST UNIVERSITY RESEARCH REVIEW BOARD FOR RESEARCH AND RESEARCH RELATED ACTIVITIES INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS.**