

**ASSESSING THE SERVANT ORGANIZATION:**

**DEVELOPMENT OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL  
LEADERSHIP ASSESSMENT (OLA) INSTRUMENT**

by

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## Abstract

This study attempted to answer three questions: *How is servant leadership defined? What are the characteristics of servant leadership? Can the presence of these characteristics within organizations be assessed through a written instrument?* There were two main parts to the study. Part one involved a Delphi study to determine the characteristics of servant leadership and part two used these characteristics to construct the *Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA)* instrument.

The three-part Delphi survey was conducted with fourteen authorities from the field of servant leadership. The panel was asked to name and rate the characteristics of the servant leader. All characteristics that were rated from “Necessary” to “Essential” in the final survey were used in the construction of the *OLA* instrument. A significant ( $p < .05$ ) decrease was found in the interquartile range between round two and round three, indicating a move toward consensus.

Seventy-four items were written for the field test version of the *OLA* and six items were added to assess job satisfaction, for a total of 80 items. The field test was conducted with 828 people from 41 organizations representing various states in the U.S. and one organization from the Netherlands. The instrument had an estimated reliability of .98. One way ANOVA and correlation tests were run with demographic data and the *OLA* score and also with the job satisfaction score. A significant ( $p < .01$ ) positive correlation of .653 was found between the *OLA* score and the job satisfaction score. A factor analysis revealed a two factor solution composed of organization assessment items and leadership assessment items. Potential subscores were considered, but there was a high correlation between the scales; therefore use of the overall *OLA* score is recommended for research purposes.

This study provides an operational definition of servant leadership and the servant organization as well as a list of the characteristics of servant leadership, as determined by a panel of experts. The *OLA* was found to be a reliable tool for measuring servant leadership in organizations and will be useful for further research as well as diagnosis in organizations.

### Summary of the Problem Addressed

Servant leadership is attracting a broader audience throughout a wide variety of organizations today. This growing interest is fueled by changes taking place in the workplace and in the society at large. In the past 25 years we have seen a dramatic increase of women in the workplace, a growing ethnic and racial diversity and a desire to see the workplace serve as a learning environment for personal growth and fulfillment. These changes, among others, have prompted a reexamination of the effectiveness of the traditional leadership model of power and authority. The traditional model has held prominence since the beginning of time, and our history is written around the use and abuse of leadership power. There is a growing call for new leadership thinking and a new vision of organizations that place service to others over self-interest and self-promotion.

Though servant leadership has been written about and practiced by several in the past few years it has not been studied in a systematic manner. The writings of Robert Greenleaf, who coined the term “servant leadership”, were not based on research or even what he called conscious logic. They were based on a keen intuitive sense of people and their relationships within institutions. This study also addressed a need to review what has been written since Greenleaf to determine what has been added to his work and can take us beyond his original ideas.

The purpose of this study is to collect, from the literature and a panel of experts, an agreed-upon list of the characteristics of servant leadership, and to develop an instrument for assessing the level at which leaders and workers perceive that these characteristics are displayed in their organizations. The goals of the study, then, can be stated in the following questions: How is servant leadership defined?, what are the characteristics of servant leadership? and can the presence of these characteristics within organizations be assessed through a written instrument?

A new leadership is needed: leadership that is not trendy and transient, but a leadership that is rooted in our most ethical and moral teaching; leadership that works because it is based on how people need to be treated, motivated and led. This study will seek to explore these dynamic questions by seeking to bring a much-needed research element to the ongoing discussion on servant leadership. It is this author's assumption that through this growing awareness we will be able to unleash the powerful potential of creativity and leadership that is within each of us for the purpose of building up ourselves and our organizations while reaching out to others and impacting a very needy world.

### Overview of the Relevant Literature

A comprehensive review of the literature revealed writings on servant leadership from different timeframes. Writings from the distant past revealed a focus on servant leadership from Biblical literature. Though the concept of the leader as servant is explicit in several Judeo-Christian writings, it also can be found in the literature from other religious groups. In the 1970's Robert Greenleaf wrote several key essays promoting the theme. His work has been taken over by the Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Creative Leadership, which seeks to promote his writings as well as more current literature on the subject. A thorough review of the current

literature was undertaken to determine what has been added to the significant work of Greenleaf.

Out of this extensive review the following characteristics were gathered.

*Summary of Servant Leadership Characteristics*

TABLE 1. Initial Clustering of Characteristics by Authors

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Authors</i>
Listening	Greenleaf (1977), Spears (1994), DePree (1989,1992,1997), Kiechel (1992), Hawkins (1990), Holden (1988), Lee C. (1993), Tice (1994), Blanchard (1995), Campbell (1997), Walker P.D. (1997)
People first, high view of people Values people Acceptance and empathy w/ People Affirms others Believes in people Respects people Skilled in relationships Encourages Develops people	Greenleaf (1977), Spears (1994), DePree (1989,1992,1997), Millard (1994,1995), Kiechel (1992), Jahner (1993), Kezar (1996), West (1996), Hawkins (1990), Hagstrom D. (1992), Holden (1988), Lee & Zemke (1993), Covey (1994), Blanchard (1995), Senge (1997), Melrose K. (1996), Hansel T. (1987), Zinkler L.C. (1990)
Intuition/foresight Vision Sees the future	Greenleaf (1977), Spears (1994), DePree (1989,1992,1997), Sims (1997), Kouzes & Posner (1993, 1995), Kezar (1996), Schwartz (1991), Lee & Zemke (1993), Covey (1994), Blanchard (1995), Zinkler L.C. (1990), Walker P.D. (1997), Green H. (1996)
Awareness/Perception Lifelong Learner Asks questions Creates learning environment/experiences Learns from others	Greenleaf (1977), Spears (1994), DePree (1989,1992,1997), Sims (1997), Kouzes & Posner (1993, 1995), Covey (1994), Sarkus (1996), Tarr (?), Hagstrom D. (1992), Tice (1994), Campbell (1997), Melrose K. (1996), Walker P.D. (1997)
Uses persuasion Vs. coercion	Greenleaf (1977), Spears (1994), Sims (1997), Walker P.D. (1997)
Healing	Greenleaf (1977), Spears (1994), DePree (1989,1992,1997), Sarkus (1996), Millard (1994,1995), Kiechel (1992)
Love/Unlimited liability Compassion	Greenleaf (1977), DePree (1989,1992,1997), Millard (1994,1995), Sims (1997), Kouzes & Posner (1993, 1995), Spears (1994), Kezar (1996), Larkin D.K. (1995)
Risk taking	Greenleaf (1977), DePree (1989,1992,1997), Kouzes & Posner (1993, 1995), Spears (1994), Walker P.D. (1997)
Laughter/Humor	Greenleaf (1977), DePree (1989,1992,1997), Spears (1994)

*(table continues)*

TABLE 1. (continued)

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Authors</i>
Ethical use of power and authority Not coercive Shared power Release control Doesn't rely on positional authority Empowers others Enables people Shared decision making Shared leadership	Greenleaf (1977), DePree (1989,1992,1997), Sims (1997), Kouzes & Posner (1993, 1995), Spears (1994), Sarkus (1996), Hatcher (1997), Santos (1997), Jahner (1993), Kezar (1996), Hagstrom D. (1992), Schwartz (1991), Lee & Zemke (1993), Covey (1994), Senge (1997), Campbell (1997), Melrose K. (1996), Stott J.R. (1986), Ward T.W. (1996), Nouwen H. (1996), Walker P.D. (1997), Larkin D.K. (1995)
Self-reflective, looks within first Spiritual journey Contemplative	Greenleaf (1977), Spears (1994), Sarkus (1996), Hatcher (1997)
Builds community Team Collaborative Inclusive Partnership "we" vs. "I" Working with vs. apart	Greenleaf (1977), Spears (1994), DePree (1989,1992,1997), Covey (1994), Sims (1997), Kouzes & Posner (1993, 1995), Sarkus (1996), Hatcher (1997), Millard (1994, 1995), Jahner (1993), Kezar (1996), Holden (1988), Schwartz (1991), Tice (1994), Campbell (1997), Walker P.D. (1997)
Models behaviors Leads by example	Millard (1994, 1995), DePree (1989,1992,1997), Sims (1997), Kouzes & Posner (1993, 1995), Hatcher (1997), Kezar (1996), Zinkler L.C. (1990), Walker P.D. (1997)
Develops familiarity Open to being known Open, honest, transparent Vulnerable Integrity, credible Admits limitations Authentic Accountable Denies self Unpretentious Not focused on own image Open to criticism Humble	Millard (1994, 1995), DePree (1989,1992,1997), Sims (1997), Kouzes & Posner (1993, 1995), Spears (1994), Hatcher (1997), Kezar (1996), West (1996), Holden (1988), Covey (1994), Ward T.W. (1996), Nouwen H. (1996), Walker P.D. (1997), Larkin D.K. (1995)
Encourages individuality Diversity Inclusive	Millard (1994, 1995), DePree (1989,1992,1997), Hansel T. (1987)
Hospitality	Jahner (1993), Larkin D.K. (1995)

(table continues)

TABLE 1. (continued)

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Authors</i>
Builds a trust environment Trusts others Is trustworthy	DePree (1989,1992,1997), Kouzes & Posner (1993, 1995), Spears (1994), Hatcher (1997), Holden (1988), Lee & Zemke (1993), Melrose K. (1996), Ward T.W. (1996)
Ethical, moral	DePree (1989,1992,1997), Sarkus (1996), Hatcher (1997), Walker P.D. (1997)
Initiates action Moves out ahead Action oriented	DePree (1989,1992,1997), Sims (1997), Kouzes & Posner (1993, 1995), Spears (1994)
Facilitating	Hagstrom D. (1992), Blanchard (1995), Green H. (1996)

### *The Need for an Instrument*

It is clear from a review of the literature that servant leadership is gaining in recognition among organizational leaders. It is also clear that servant leadership remains an intuition-based concept. There is a significant lack of quantitative research, as we are still in the early stages of study in this new field; and there is a need for tools to assist in ongoing research. This study seeks to help define servant leadership in terms of its characteristics and then to use those characteristics to design an assessment tool that can be used within organizations or teams to determine the presence of those characteristics. It is likely that an instrument of this type will encourage the gathering of quantifiable data on this intuitively held leadership concept.

### Synopsis of Methodology Used

#### *The Delphi Survey*

In addition to the collection of servant leadership characteristics from the literature, this study involved both a three-part Delphi survey and the development of the *Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA)* instrument.

### *Selection of the Expert Panel*

The experts were chosen based upon the fact that they had written on servant leadership or had taught at the university level on the subject. Fourteen of the original 25 experts who were asked to participate completed all three parts of the Delphi. The 14 participants included: Larry Spears, The Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership; Ann McGee-Cooper and Duane Trammell, Ann McGee-Cooper & Associates (note: these two worked together on a single response for each part of the survey and are therefore counted as one respondent); Jim Kouzes, Learning Systems, Inc./The Tom Peters Group; Dr. Bill Millard, Life Discovery and World Servants; Lea Williams, Bennett College; Dr. Joe Roberts, Suncoast Church of Christ; Jack Lowe, Jr., TD Industries; Dr. Pam Walker, Cerritos College; Grace Barnes, Azusa Pacific University; Ann Liprie-Spence, McMurray University; Deborah Campbell, Servant Leadership Community of West Ohio; Dr. Ted Ward, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Michigan State University; Bishop Bennett Sims, The Institute for Servant Leadership.

### *Data Collection Procedure*

A three-round Delphi process was used. The panel of experts received a series of three questionnaires which were sent along with cover letters and pre-addressed, stamped return envelopes.

#### *Questionnaire one.*

The first questionnaire provided a summary statement of the research purpose and goals, a brief description of the Delphi method being used and forms for recording responses. The panel was asked to list at least ten characteristics of the servant leader. Once they completed the list they were asked to open an envelope that contained a list of characteristics drawn from the literature. They then were asked to add to their list any of the characteristics from the literature

listing they felt should be included. Along with this first questionnaire a statement of assumptions was included to establish a framework for the Delphi question. This statement read:

This study is based on the assumption that there are characteristics of the servant leader which are observable within the context of organizational and team life. The characteristics of the servant leader may include behaviors, attitudes, values and abilities.

The Delphi question itself read: What do you judge to be the characteristics of the servant leader?

*Questionnaire two.*

The second questionnaire presented a compilation of all of the lists received from round one. This compiled list was provided with a semantic differential rating scale on which the experts were asked to rate each of the 67 items. The scale included four values placed at regular intervals on a seven-point scale. The four values used are described below.

Essential - Without this characteristic a person would not be a servant leader.

Necessary - This characteristic would normally be present in a person who is a servant leader.

Desirable - This characteristic is compatible with being a servant leader but is not really necessary.

Unnecessary - This characteristic probably has little or no relation to a person being a servant leader.

Experts were also asked to add additional characteristics that they felt needed to be added at this point. Three characteristics were added to the list for the next questionnaire for a cumulative total of seventy.

*Questionnaire three.*

The third questionnaire included the results of the responses to round two. The results were presented using the same semantic scale as in round two with the median, twenty-fifth

percentile, and seventy-fifth percentile of each characteristic rating marked. They were asked to rate each item once again, while providing their reasoning for any responses that fell outside of the middle 50% of the group response.

#### *Treatment of the Data*

The median and interquartile range of total response for each item were computed to determine which characteristics were rated as *Necessary* or *Essential* for describing the servant leader. These characteristics then formed the basic constructs for the development of the *OLA* instrument items. These items, along with their clustering into six potential subscores are listed in Table 2. A sign test was run on the interquartile ranges from rounds two and three to reveal a significant movement towards consensus by the expert panel. This movement towards consensus provides for a strong validation of the underlying constructs for the instrument.

### *Development of the OLA Instrument*

#### *Item Construction*

Results from the Delphi survey were used as the constructs from which the instrument items were written. Likert-style items were written for each construct with more items being written for those that received higher ratings in the Delphi study. In the field test it was determined that the average time to take the 80-item instrument was 15 – 20 minutes.

In addition to the six potential subscore clusters, the items were written from three different perspectives, producing three different sections of the instrument: assessing the entire organization, assessing the leadership of the organization and assessing both from the perspective of the respondent's personal experience. This configuration provided an opportunity to look at two additional subscores: an assessment of the organization and an assessment of the organization's leadership.

TABLE 2. Items Clustered into Potential Subscores

<i>Potential Subscores</i>	<i>Categories</i>	<i>Items Servant leaders:</i>
Values people	By believing in people <i>Maintaining a high view of people</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect others</li> <li>• Believe in the unlimited potential of each person</li> <li>• Accept people as they are</li> <li>• Trust others</li> <li>• Are perceptive concerning the needs of others</li> <li>• Enjoy people</li> <li>• Show appreciation to others</li> </ul>
	By putting others first <i>Before self</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put the needs of others ahead of their own</li> <li>• Show love and compassion toward others</li> </ul>
	By listening <i>Receptive, non-judgmental</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are receptive listeners</li> </ul>
Develops people	By providing for learning and growth <i>Developing potential</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunities for people to develop to their full potential</li> <li>• Leaders use their power and authority to benefit others</li> <li>• Provide mentor relationships in order to help people grow professionally</li> <li>• View conflict as an opportunity to learn &amp; grow</li> <li>• Create an environment that encourages learning</li> </ul>
	By modeling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead by example by modeling appropriate behavior</li> <li>• Models a balance of life and work and encourages others to do so</li> </ul>
	By encouraging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build people up through encouragement and affirmation</li> </ul>

(table continues)

TABLE 2. (continued)

<i>Potential Subscores</i>	<i>Categories</i>	<i>Items Servant leaders:</i>
Builds Community	By enhancing relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relate well to others</li> <li>• Work to bring healing to hurting relationships</li> </ul>
	By working collaboratively <i>Emphasizing teamwork</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate the building of community &amp; team</li> <li>• Work with others instead of apart from them</li> </ul>
	By valuing the differences of others <i>Differing gifts, cultures, viewpoints</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value differences in people</li> <li>• Allow for individuality of style and expression</li> </ul>
Displays authenticity	By being open to being known <i>Willing to be transparent</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admit personal limitations &amp; mistakes</li> <li>• Are open to being known by others</li> <li>• Promote open communication and sharing of information</li> <li>• Are accountable &amp; responsible to others</li> </ul>
	By being learners <i>Being self aware, open to input from others</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are non-judgmental – keep an open mind</li> <li>• Are open to learning from others</li> <li>• Are flexible – willing to compromise</li> <li>• Evaluate themselves before blaming others</li> <li>• Are open to receiving criticism &amp; challenge from others</li> </ul>
	By maintaining integrity <i>Honest, consistent, ethical behavior</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are trustworthy</li> <li>• Demonstrate high integrity &amp; honesty</li> <li>• Maintain high ethical standards</li> </ul>

(table continues)

TABLE 2. (continued)

<i>Potential Subscores</i>	<i>Categories</i>	<i>Items Servant leaders:</i>
Provides leadership	By envisioning the future <i>Intuition as to direction for the organization</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has a vision of the future</li> <li>• Uses intuition and foresight to see the unforeseeable</li> <li>• Provides hope to others</li> </ul>
	By taking initiative <i>Moving out ahead</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourages risktaking</li> <li>• Exhibits courage</li> <li>• Has healthy self-esteem</li> <li>• Initiates action by moving out ahead</li> <li>• Is competent – has the knowledge and skills to get things done</li> </ul>
	By clarifying goals <i>Understanding what it takes to get to the vision</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is clear on goals and good at pointing the direction</li> <li>• Is able to turn negatives into positives (threats to opportunities)</li> </ul>
Shares leadership	By sharing power <i>Empowering others</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empowers others by sharing power</li> <li>• Is low in control of others</li> <li>• Uses persuasion to influence others instead of coercion</li> </ul>
	By sharing status <i>Issues of position, honor, self-promotion</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is humble – does not promote him or herself</li> <li>• Leads from personal influence rather than positional authority</li> <li>• Does not demand or expect honor and awe for being the leader</li> <li>• Does not seek after special status or perks of leadership</li> </ul>

### *Item Review and Revision*

Six people served as a panel of judges to independently review each of the items and determine whether or not they represented the constructs. The judges were also asked to review each item for clarity, grammar and structure. They were also asked to provide input as to the layout of the instrument and the understandability of the instructions. From the responses gained, some items were clarified and clarifications were made in the instructions. With this

input the initial instrument was developed and readied for the pre-field test. The ordering of the items in the instrument was determined randomly by placing all of the separate items in a box and drawing them out one by one.

### *Constructing the Instrument*

In addition to the 74 items written for the *OLA*, six items representing job satisfaction were added to provide for a comparison to the *OLA* score. No mention of “servant” or “servant leadership” was used in the instrument. Seven demographic questions were added to enable comparisons between demographic data and the *OLA* score.

### *Pre-Field Test*

Twenty two people, adult learners from two different colleges, participated in the pre-field test. In addition to taking the instrument, this group was asked to respond as to whether the instrument and the individual items were understandable and to see if any changes needed to be made prior to the field test. Measures of reliability using an Cronbach-alpha coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) and item-total correlation using a Pearson correlation were run on this small sample to determine if the instrument was ready for the field test.

Item-to-test correlations were run and those with low scores were considered for changes. Participants in the pre-field test also provided input as to unclear items and instructions and recommended changes. Based on this input the instrument was adjusted by re-writing certain items and clarifying instructions.

The instrument was revised for the field test, resulting in 74 test items plus six additional items added to provide for a job satisfaction to servant leadership comparison. The job satisfaction items are not a part of the *OLA* instrument but an additional instrument for the purpose of comparison.

### *Field Test*

Out of 1624 instruments distributed to 45 organizations, a total of 847 people participated in the field test from 41 participating organizations. A total of 828 of the responses were usable. Respondents came from various states throughout the United States and one organization from the Netherlands.

#### *Description of the sample.*

The sample, consisting of individuals from the different organizations, represented all of the following four sectors: religious non-profit organizations, secular non-profit organizations, for profit organizations and public agencies. Approval for the cooperation of the organizations with this field test came from someone in authority at each organization, but the actual field test was conducted under the direction of the Human Resource department. A specific contact person was designated from this department to oversee the distribution, implementation and collection of the instruments. This was to help eliminate the perception or reality of coercion and to encourage voluntary participation. Participation was completely voluntary and anonymity was guaranteed for each participant (Names were not requested). Each participant was provided with a consent form and required to sign it prior to taking the instrument. A pre-determined number of instruments was sent to each participating organization along with instructions and consent forms. Each instrument was pre-marked with a number designating the participating organization for tracking purposes.

#### *Data collection procedure.*

The contact person from the Human Resource/Training department of each participating organization distributed, collected and mailed in the completed instruments to the researcher.

Thank you letters were sent out to each organization. A tabulation was made of all of the instruments collected compared with those sent out.

*Treatment of data and item analysis.*

Data from the completed instruments were entered into SPSS software and were proofread to ensure accuracy. A reliability estimate was attained with a Cronbach Alpha. An item to total correlation was run on each item to determine the level of correlation of each item with the total instrument. The relative strength of individual items was evaluated to consider necessary revisions.

*Item review and revision.*

Items were identified for possible revision or deletion based on the information gained from the data analysis.

## Presentation of the Findings

### *The Delphi Survey: Consensus of the Expert Panel*

The medians and interquartile ranges for each item were calculated for rounds two and three. Sixty-three of the characteristics showed a movement towards consensus from the ratings in round 2 to those in round 3. Five characteristics had no change and only one showed an increase in the interquartile range. A sign test was run on the interquartile ranges from round two and round three. Significant reduction was found beyond the .01 level. A median of 5.0 and above was required for a characteristic to become the basis for an item in the instrument. Sixty of the characteristics had a 5.0 or higher which means that all of these characteristics were rated as *Necessary* or *Essential* to being a servant leader. These characteristics are listed in Table 3 from the highest to lowest medians.

TABLE 3. List of Characteristics from the Delphi Survey to be used in the Development of the Instrument

	<i>Median</i>	<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>IR</i>
1	7	Respects people	0
2	7	Empowers others by sharing power	1
3	7	Builds people up through encouragement & affirmation	1
4	7	Is trustworthy	0
5	7	Trusts others	1
6	7	Facilitates the building of community & team	2
7	7	Shares leadership	2
8	7	Is a receptive listener	1
9	7	Has moral authority stemming from high ethical standards	1
10	7	Demonstrates high integrity & honesty	0
11	7	Leads from personal influence rather than positional authority	1
12	7	Leads by example by modeling appropriate behavior	.25
13	7	Enjoys people	2
14	6.5	Denies him or herself: leads for the sake of the led rather than to benefit the leader	2
15	6.5	Relates well to others	1.25
16	6.5	Demonstrates love and compassion toward others	1.25
17	6.5	Provides hope to others	1
18	6	Has a vision of the future	.5
19	6	Initiates action by moving out ahead	2
20	6	Believes in the unlimited potential of each person	1
21	6	Accepts people as they are	2
22	6	Admits personal limitations & mistakes	1.25
23	6	Works to develop people to their potential	1
24	6	Brings healing to people in relationships	1
25	6	Promotes open communication and sharing of information	1.25
26	6	Is open to learning form others	1
27	6	Is accountable & responsible to others	0
28	6	Is perceptive concerning the needs of others	1
29	6	Does not demand or expect honor and awe for being leader	2
30	6	Uses his or her power and authority to benefit others	1
31	6	Leads from a base of spirituality & faith	2.5
32	6	Exhibits courage	1
33	6	Knows his/her own shadows (dark side)	2
34	6	Has self-esteem	1
35	6	Is self-reflective (looks within first)	1.25
36	6	Creates an environment that encourages learning	2
37	6	Uses persuasion to influence others instead of coercion	1
38	6	Is humble – does not promote him or herself	2

(table continues)

TABLE 3. (continued)

	<i>Median</i>	<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>IR</i>
39	6	Is competent – has the knowledge and skills to get things done	1
40	5.5	Is clear on goals and good at pointing the direction	1
41	5.5	Works with others instead of apart from them	2
42	5.5	Values diversity	1
43	5.5	Promotes laughter and positive humor	2.25
44	5.5	Does not seek after special status or perks of leadership	2
45	5.5	Is open to receiving criticism & challenge from others	1
46	5	Uses intuition and foresight to see the unforeseeable	2.25
47	5	Is open to being known by others	2.25
48	5	Is creative in showing appreciation to others	0
49	5	Is a mentor	1
50	5	Is non-judgmental – keeps an open mind	1
51	5	Views conflict as an opportunity to learn & grow	0
52	5	Encourages risktaking	0
53	5	Is hospitable	2.25
54	5	Appreciates individuality – doesn't force conformity	1.25
55	5	Does not retaliate when wronged	2.5
56	5	Is low in control of others	1.25
57	5	Is flexible – willing to compromise	1
58	5	Is able to turn negatives into positives	1
59	5	Is a situational leader by responding to the readiness of the followers	2
60	5	Provides care to people who are oppressed and marginalized by systems	.5

These sixty characteristics were used to develop the 74 items in the *OLA* instrument for the field test.

#### *Field Test of the OLA Instrument*

##### *Description of the Sample*

The sample was almost evenly divided between female and male. All levels of education were represented with the majority being those with Some College or Undergraduate College. The largest percentage of respondents came from religious organizations (40 %) followed by business organizations and then educational organizations. Sixty-three percent identified

themselves as Workforce, while 24% identified as Management/Supervision and 13% as Top Leadership. All age groups were represented with the majority being between 20 and 49 years of age. The respondents were overwhelming white (87%) with 7% identifying as Black-not Hispanic origin and 4% as Hispanic.

#### *Results on the Entire Instrument*

The mean score from the 828 usable instruments was 278.77; possible total score is 370. The standard deviation was 48.78. Estimated reliability, using the Cronbach-Alpha coefficient, was .98.

#### *Item Analysis*

The lowest item-to-test correlation was .41 and the highest was .77, showing that all of the items have a strong correlation with the instrument as a whole.

#### *Results on Six Potential OLA Subscales*

Six potential subscales were considered prior to the field test. Reliability estimates and item-to-test correlations were run as well as correlations between scales. All of the six subscales: Values People, Develops People, Builds Community, Displays Authenticity, Provides Leadership and Shares Leadership, revealed high reliability scores along with high correlations between the scales. Table 4 lists the means, standard deviations and reliability estimates (*a*) for each potential subscale.

#### *Results on Two Potential OLA Subscales*

Two additional potential subscales were considered after the field test had been completed. Since the instrument was designed to assess both the organization and the leadership it seemed that these two could be looked at as potential subscales. Reliability estimates and item-to-test correlations were run as well as correlations between scales. Each of the two subscales,

TABLE 4. Reliability Scores on Six Potential *OLA* Subscores

<i>Potential Subscores</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Total possible score</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>a</i>
Values People	828	53.84	70	8.88	.91
Develops People	828	37.37	50	7.78	.90
Builds Community	828	45.20	60	7.87	.90
Displays Authenticity	828	51.79	70	10.29	.93
Provides Leadership	828	45.59	60	8.49	.91
Shares Leadership	828	44.99	60	9.24	.93

Organization and Leadership, had high reliability scores; but once again there was a high correlation between the scales. Table 5 shows the means, standard deviations and reliability estimates (*a*) for each potential subscore.

TABLE 5. Reliability Scores on Two Potential *OLA* Subscores

<i>Potential subscores</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Total possible score</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>a</i>
Organization assessment	828	113.66	150	18.61	.95
Leadership assessment	828	165.11	220	32.14	.98

The correlation between these two potential subscores is .836.

#### *Relationships of Demographic Data to Total Instrument Score*

Seven demographic questions were asked of the participants in the field study and a one-way ANOVA was run between each one and the total instrument score. Correlations were also run and the significant relationships are listed below.

*Gender.* No significant difference in mean *OLA* scores,  $F(1,789) = .998, p > .05$ , was found between males and females.

*Education level attained.* No significant differences in mean *OLA* scores,  $F(5,807) = 2.699$ ,  $p > .05$ , were found among any of the educational levels specified.

*Type of organization.* *OLA* means of individuals employed by community service organizations were significantly higher,  $F(5,809) = 13.091$ ,  $p < .05$ , than those of individuals employed by business and medical service provider organizations. No significant ( $p > .05$ ) difference was found among the categories of business – for profit, medical service provider, government, education and religious organizations. No significant ( $p > .05$ ) difference was found among government, education, religious and community service organizations.

*Position/role.* A significant difference,  $F(2,807) = 9.611$ ,  $p < .05$ , was found in *OLA* scores between top leadership, and the categories of management/supervision and workforce with top leadership scoring higher. No significant ( $p > .05$ ) difference was found in the *OLA* scores of management/supervision and workforce. A significant ( $p < .01$ ) negative relationship of  $-.139$  existed between position/role and the total instrument score, indicating that the higher the position in the organization, the higher the scores on the instrument.

*Age.* No significant difference in *OLA* scores,  $F(5,810) = 2.273$ ,  $p > .05$ , was found among the various age categories. A significant ( $p < .05$ ) positive correlation of  $.076$  was found between age and the total instrument score, indicating that the higher the age, the higher the scores on the instrument.

*Years in the organization.* No significant difference,  $F(5,810) = .606$ ,  $p < .05$ , was found among *OLA* scores of individuals who have worked for their organization less than 1 year, 1-3 years, 4-6 years, 7-10 years, 10-15 years and more than 15 years.

*Ethnic origin.* No significant difference in *OLA* scores,  $F(3,799) = 2.255$ ,  $p < .05$ , was found among the categories of White – not Hispanic origin, Black – not Hispanic origin,

Hispanic and Asian or Pacific Islanders. The two categories of Other, with eight cases, and American Indian or Alaskan Native, with one case, were eliminated in order to create an accurate picture.

#### *Results of Correlation between Job Satisfaction and the OLA Instrument*

Six additional items were added to the *OLA* instrument for the field test version, bringing the total items to 80. These items were included so that a correlation of job satisfaction to the *OLA* scores could be considered. A Pearson correlation was run and it was found that a significant ( $p < .01$ ) positive correlation of .635 existed, accounting for 40% of the variance in the total instrument score. This is a strong indication that the higher the score given on the instrument, the higher the level of job satisfaction. The Job Satisfaction score obtained an estimated reliability, using the Cronbach-Alpha coefficient, of .81.

#### *Factor Analysis*

A variety of exploratory factor analyses (principal components solution) were conducted looking at several different dimensionalities with only one yielding an appealing solution. A two factor solution, using a varimax rotation, showed evidence of items loading on the two sections of organizational assessment items and leadership assessment items.

#### *Item Analysis and Reduction*

The *OLA* instrument items were reduced from 74 to 60 in order to decrease the time it takes to complete the instrument and to make it more appealing to organizations that might consider its use in the future. The rationale for eliminating items was based on selecting items with lower item-to-test correlations and items that could be removed without affecting instrument validity. It was important to maintain the integrity of the Delphi results as the basis for this instrument. Reliability and item-to-test correlations were run on the 60-item reduced

instrument. The revised instrument had a mean of 223.79 on a total potential score of 300 and the standard deviation was 41.08. The alpha coefficient is .98. The lowest item-test correlation is .41 and the highest is .79. The reduced 60-item instrument maintains the same reliability and adherence to the foundational constructs as the longer instrument while eliminating unnecessary items, allowing for a shorter, easier-to-take instrument.

## Applications of the Study

### *Definitions of Servant Leadership and the Servant Organization*

Based upon a review of the literature and the Delphi results, the following operational definitions are offered. Servant leadership is an understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader. Servant leadership promotes the valuing and developing of people, the building of community, the practice of authenticity, the providing of leadership for the good of those led and the sharing of power and status for the common good of each individual, the total organization and those served by the organization.

The term servant organization is not found in the literature, though Greenleaf spoke of the institution as servant. Greenleaf, however, addressed the organizational issues involved rather than the idea of assessing an organization in light of the characteristics of servant leadership. This author believes that the servant organization is a natural extension and application of the concept of servant leadership. Leaders do not operate in a vacuum. They operate within organizational structures which include managers, workers, vendors and customers. The characteristics of the servant leader may be applied to an entire organization, or a workgroup within an organization as well as an individual leader. Organizations have a significant impact on the people they employ, on the customers they serve and on the society at large. This impact goes beyond one, or a group, of leaders. Servant leadership should become

characteristic of the organizational culture in order to produce the most benefit. That is why the *OLA* has been designed to assess the characteristics of servant leadership within the entire organization.

The servant organization is defined here as an organization where the characteristics of servant leadership are displayed through the organizational culture and are valued and practiced by its leadership and workforce. A servant leadership model, presented in Figure 1, reveals the definition of the servant leader, the key components of servant leadership and the definition of the servant organization.

#### Statement of Implications for Research and Practice

##### *Reliability, Validity and Usefulness of the OLA*

The reliability of the instrument indicates that it will be useful for further research in servant leadership. The *OLA* was designed not only for research, but for purposes of prediction and diagnosis within organizations. An organization that desires to become more servant oriented could assess itself to find weaknesses and strengths to be addressed. *OLA* results would provide an objective look at how the organization is perceived by various groups within the organization. It would also reveal any differences in the perceptions of the top leadership, management and workforce. The open sharing of results could lead to an organizational dialogue on how to align the organization more closely with the values it wants to promote. Organizations that seek to promote an organizational culture based on openness, trust, teamwork, leadership at all levels and integrity would use the *OLA* to assess current status and identify areas to improve. The instrument could be taken in separate work units or teams and those separate results compared to the entire organization's results. In this way, critical issues could be identified in more focused parts of the organization, allowing for more specific and targeted

<b>Servant Leadership is ...</b>	
an understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader. Servant leadership promotes the valuing and development of people, the building of community, the practice of authenticity, the providing of leadership for the good of those led and the sharing of power and status for the common good of each individual, the total organization and those served by the organization.	
<b>The Servant Leader ...</b>	
<b>Values People</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By believing in people</li> <li>• By serving other's needs before his or her own</li> <li>• By receptive, non-judgmental listening</li> </ul>
<b>Develops People</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By providing opportunities for learning and growth</li> <li>• By modeling appropriate behavior</li> <li>• By building up others through encouragement and affirmation</li> </ul>
<b>Builds Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By building strong personal relationships</li> <li>• By working collaboratively with others</li> <li>• By valuing the differences of others</li> </ul>
<b>Displays Authenticity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By being open and accountable to others</li> <li>• By a willingness to learn from others</li> <li>• By maintaining integrity and trust</li> </ul>
<b>Provides Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By envisioning the future</li> <li>• By taking initiative</li> <li>• By clarifying goals</li> </ul>
<b>Shares Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By facilitating a shared vision</li> <li>• By sharing power and releasing control</li> <li>• By sharing status and promoting others</li> </ul>
<b>The Servant Organization is ...</b>	
... an organization in which the characteristics of servant leadership are displayed through the organizational culture and are valued and practiced by the leadership and workforce.	

*Figure 1:* Servant leadership and the servant organization model

interventions. If, in the future, the *OLA* results could be correlated to organizational outcomes such as productivity, staff morale, customer service or absenteeism, then the instrument could be used for predicting probabilities of success within organizational units. Leadership could be

assessed through the *OLA* and predictions could be made as to the probable success of particular leaders as they are considered for future leadership roles. There is a wealth of possible research to be done in organizations using the *OLA*. Some of the research questions that may be considered are:

- Are servant organizations more successful in promoting creativity and risktaking than non-servant organizations?
- Do servant organizations produce results at the same level as non-servant organizations?
- Is staff morale, motivation and energy higher in servant organizations than in non-servant organizations?
- Do servant organizations provide a higher level of service to customers than do non-servant organizations?
- Do higher scores on the *OLA* correlate positively with higher collaboration and teamwork, lower fear in the workplace, lower absenteeism, greater tenure of employees and lower employee theft?
- What organizational structures best support a servant organizational culture? (i.e. supervision systems, office configuration, staff policies, compensation systems)
- What effect does training have on moving organizations towards servant leadership?
- Does the method of training (i.e. traditional classroom, experiential learning, self-directed learning) enhance or hinder an organization's movement towards servant leadership?
- Do certain types of organizations tend towards servant leadership while others tend towards more of an authority/control model?
- Does a servant organizational culture produce more servant leaders?
- Are servant leaders effective leaders, and if so, on what standard of effectiveness?

In addition to these questions, there are opportunities to apply the concepts of servant leadership to other fields of study beyond organizational life. For instance, the relationship of servant leadership to teaching children or adults, providing medical care, cross-cultural ministry or business, interracial dialogue and reconciliation, and international diplomacy are all areas in which the servant concept of leadership may have application. It is hoped that the *OLA* and the results of this study will help to further ongoing research in these areas.

### Conclusion

This study was undertaken due to the lack of objective, quantifiable research in the important, and growing, area of servant leadership. It was also done to address a need for an operational definition of the concept, creating a point of reference for further studies, writings and dialogue. In addition to this, little has been written on the concept of the servant organization and the application of servant leadership to organizational culture. There is great potential in developing these concepts and it is hoped that the *Organizational Leadership Assessment* will become a useful and valuable tool for pursuing future research.

The Organizational Leadership Assessment – Revised Instrument (60 Items)

Please provide your response to each statement by placing an X in one of the five boxes

1	2	3	4	5
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	<b>Strongly Agree</b>

Section 1

In this section, please respond to each statement as you believe it applies to **the entire organization** including workers, managers/supervisors and top leadership

**In general, people within this organization ....**

	1	2	3	4	5
1 Trust each other					
2 Are clear on the key goals of the organization					
3 Are non-judgmental – they keep an open mind					
4 Respect each other					
5 Know where this organization is headed in the future					
6 Maintain high ethical standards					
7 Work well together in teams					
8 Value differences in culture, race & ethnicity					
9 Are caring & compassionate towards each other					
10 Demonstrate high integrity & honesty					
11 Are trustworthy					
12 Relate well to each other					
13 Attempt to work with others more than working on their own					
14 Are held accountable for reaching work goals					
15 Are aware of the needs of others					
16 Allow for individuality of style and expression					
17 Are encouraged by supervisors to share in making <i>important</i> decisions					
18 Work to maintain positive working relationships					
19 Accept people as they are					
20 View conflict as an opportunity to learn & grow					
21 Know how to get along with people					

Please provide your response to each statement by placing an **X** in one of the five boxes

1	2	3	4	5
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	<b>Strongly Agree</b>

**Section 2**

In this next section, please respond to each statement as you believe it applies to the leadership of the organization including managers/supervisors and top leadership

<b>Managers/Supervisors and Top Leadership in this Organization ....</b>	1	2	3	4	5
22 Communicate a clear vision of the future of the organization					
23 Are open to learning from those who are <i>below</i> them in the organization					
24 Allow workers to help determine where this organization is headed					
25 Work alongside the workers instead of separate from them					
26 Use persuasion to influence others instead of coercion or force					
27 Don't hesitate to provide the leadership that is needed					
28 Promote open communication and sharing of information					
29 Give workers the power to make <i>important</i> decisions					
30 Provide the support and resources needed to help workers meet their goals					
31 Create an environment that encourages learning					
32 Are open to receiving criticism & challenge from others					
33 Say what they mean, and mean what they say					
34 Encourage each person in the organization to exercise leadership					
35 Admit personal limitations & mistakes					
36 Encourage people to take risks even if they may fail					
37 Practice the same behavior they expect from others					
38 Facilitate the building of community & team					
39 Do not demand special recognition for being leaders					
40 Lead by example by modeling appropriate behavior					
41 Seek to influence others from a positive relationship rather than from the authority of their position					
42 Provide opportunities for all workers to develop to their full potential					
43 Honestly evaluate themselves before seeking to evaluate others					

Please provide your response to each statement by placing an **X** in one of the five boxes

1	2	3	4	5
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	<b>Strongly Agree</b>

<b>Managers/Supervisors and Top Leadership in this Organization ....</b>	1	2	3	4	5
44 Use their power and authority to benefit the workers					
45 Take appropriate action when it is needed					
46 Build people up through encouragement and affirmation					
47 Encourage workers to work <i>together</i> rather than competing against each other					
48 Are humble – they do not promote themselves					
49 Communicate clear plans & goals for the organization					
50 Provide mentor relationships in order to help people grow professionally					
51 Are accountable & responsible to others					
52 Are receptive listeners					
53 Do not seek after special status or the “perks” of leadership					
54 Put the needs of the workers ahead of their own					

### Section 3

In this next section, please respond to each statement as you believe it is true about **you personally** and **your role** in the organization

<b>In viewing my own role in the organization ...</b>	1	2	3	4	5
55 I feel appreciated by my supervisor for what I contribute to the organization					
56 I am listened to by those <i>above</i> me in the organization					
57 I receive encouragement and affirmation from those <i>above</i> me in the organization					
58 I trust the leadership of this organization					
59 I am respected by those <i>above</i> me in the organization					
60 In this organization, a person’s <i>work</i> is valued more than their <i>title</i>					

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