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# Those who dare to lead must seek to serve first: Leadership styles of New Jersey school superintendents

John Alfieri  
*Walden University*

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2009

ABSTRACT

Those Who Dare to Lead Must Seek to Serve First:  
Leadership Styles of New Jersey School Superintendents

by

John B. Alfieri

M.Ed., William Paterson University, 1996  
B.A., Montclair State University, 1992

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Education  
Program

Walden University  
May 2009

## ABSTRACT

Greenleaf's servant leadership model has been described as an innovative vision in which the leader performs duties of service as the focal point of a mission for social change. Although the servant leadership model has been widely implemented in business and religious organizations, its effectiveness in educational settings has not yet been widely explored. Therefore, the purpose of this explanatory correlational study was to examine the prevalence and effectiveness of servant leadership among a random sample of 156 of New Jersey's school superintendents. Subjects completed the Self-Assessment of Servant Leadership (SASL) and the Leadership Practice Inventory (LPI) that assesses 5 functional attributes of best practice leadership including modeling, inspiring, challenging, enabling and encouraging. A median split of raw SASL scores created a dichotomous classification as servant or non-servant leaders which was employed in chi-square analysis that demonstrated no significant links connecting SASL classification with gender, ethnicity, academic degree or experience in education or administration. However, independent sample t-tests revealed that servant leaders demonstrated significantly more best-practice decision-making across all 5 LPI attributes than were observed for non-servant leaders. These results led to the conclusion that the servant leadership model aligns well with the role of the school superintendent, and that servant leaders may possess advantageous characteristics that allow them to facilitate systemic reforms in organizations. This study represents an important contribution to the existing literature and can enhance social change initiatives by informing the professional development of educational leaders that will ultimately benefit student achievement.



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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the three absolute adorations of my life: Matthew, Alyssa, and Jenna. No matter what they call me in the workplace, no title will ever measure up to the one I am called, and called, and called some more: “Daddy.” Always remember, “Our greatest glory consists not in never in falling, but in rising every time we fall.” Life is for the living; just when you think a task is too far out of your reach...reach a little farther. All my love, all my life.



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sense of hope and perseverance. To my future grandchildren, whom I hope will see this in 2 decades, do not go where the path may lead; rather, find a place and forge your own.

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May the best of your past be the worst day of your future!

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

*The future society may be just as mediocre as this one. And no amount of restructuring or changing the system or tearing it down in the hope that something better will change this. There may be a better system...but, if the people to lead it are not there, that better system will not produce a better society. (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 59)*

### Background of the Study

Servant leadership embraces the belief system that a leader must innately possess the passion to lead. The leader must remain steadfast, with an unyielding set of internal constructs, operating under the assumption that the goals of an organization are to serve. With laser-like focus on the achievement of results through people, the servant leader always has a challenge or a “big dream” for members of the organization (Greenleaf, 1977). Although various definitions of leadership and leadership styles exist, not much happens without a dream and the presence of a dreamer to create new realities for others (Spears, 2004). However, the common attribute of all leadership styles is the unique ability to persuade others to follow willingly (Hughes, 2002). Frank (1993) commented, “Since the first two people came together for the purposes of completing a task, the subject of leadership has been debated” (p. 381).

Servant leadership focuses upon the contributions of the leader rather than a learned set of skills (Spears, 2004). Servant leadership fosters a sense of autonomy and choice as it builds upon service to others (Schulman, 2002). This sense of a belief in the ability and the vigorous work of others within the community serves to enhance the quality of a professional community of practice (Fullan, 1998). The servant leader is usually the one whose mere presence enriches the lives of others, that one special person

whose infectious *can do* mentality strives to light the path to greatness. In the world of the servant leader, change is a constant (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2003).

School-based servant leaders, they seek to provide an extraordinary set of lofty goals that place student achievement at the forefront of their thinking (Hughes, 2002).

Lake (2006) asserted:

Children are the messengers we send to a time we will never see and to a future which we cannot adequately describe...by providing an education adapted to the times, to the capacity, and to the condition of each child so that all children may maximize their potential and become contributing members of this society. (p. 1)

Thus, it is the responsibility of educational servant leaders to ensure that failure is not an option. A primary social change mission for America's public education system is to build and enhance an informed future citizenry. Empowering those who stand closest to the students never permits the leaders to underestimate the worth, value, dignity, and contributions of others to the total school community (Senge, 2000; Sergiovanni, 2000; Wenger & Snyder, 2000).

Although the research from the 1970s to the 1990s focused on the overarching actions of the servant leader in the hopes of operationalizing the concept (Irving, 2004), later research sought to measure the goals of the servant leader in comparison to the goals of the academic program to quantify a correlation to student achievement (Greenfield, 2004). Servant leadership at the administrative level functions as a model for emulation within the classroom ranks, thus impacting instruction and, ultimately, student achievement (Irving, 2004; Prolmann, 2002).

Servant leadership has the potential to influence positive social change, one of the core missions of Walden University. This philosophy has contributed to the creation of an

environment that invites people to belong, have a personal impact, and be empowered. The fundamental processes of servant leadership lead directly to maximizing personal involvement and a stake in the process. In today's society, many teachers feel a sense of disconnect and a lack of satisfaction. Servant leadership is systemic, ecological, encompassing, and in the service of others. It is based on respect for the system and has a long-term vision (Frick, 2004). Its purpose is to foster respect, evolution, growth, global and social consciousness, ethics, and social responsibility (Abrashoff, 2002).

Since the initial publication of Greenleaf's (1977) essay, many noted researchers have attempted to examine and extend the theory of servant leadership (Page & Wong, 1998). In many leadership textbooks, servant leadership often is left out or mentioned simply as a motivational tool for occasional use (Spears, 2004). Prior to 2002, the studies of servant leadership outside of the business and religious realms sought to identify leaders only as servant leaders (Taylor, 2002). In the current world climate, the next phase of study illustrates a clear lack of assessing the impact and effectiveness of this unique blend of leading and motivating (Keena, 2006).

Servant leaders at the administrative level function as a model for emulation within the classroom ranks, thus impacting instruction (Irving, 2004; Prolmann, 2002). Either way, the leader must establish a community with shared goals that seeks to enrich lives. Thus, it can be stated that one who wishes to lead must dare to serve first. For the purposes of this study, the leader is the superintendent, charged with the establishment of a professional learning community with shared goals, missions, and defining principles. This study attempted to analyze the leadership styles of the superintendents in a New

Jersey school district in relation to the five functional attributes of servant leadership as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI; Kouzes & Posner, 2003): modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, encouraging the heart, and enabling others to act. A detailed review of the literature relevant to servant leadership is provided in chapter 2.

### Statement of the Problem

There is a problem in education, namely, the strong need for true leadership at the level of the superintendency. Many researchers have asserted that very few real leaders exist in the school superintendency (Bennis & Nanus, 1997; Hughes, 2002). This need has never been greater, magnified by the sheer number of world issues confronting schools (McCrimmon, 2008). By some estimates, more than half of all current superintendents are estimated to retire within the next 5 years (Peterson & Kelley, 2001). If public education is to merely survive and possibly thrive, the leadership crisis must be overcome. It is a paradox that in this time of tremendous trepidation, the answer to the leadership drought may lie in the words of an ancient Jewish rabbi, who stated, “He that would be greatest among you, let him be the servant of all” (as cited in Matthew 23:11). This is the call for servant leadership.

According to Russell (2001), the servant leadership model has been widely applied and accepted in business, industry, and religious institutions. In the review of the literature, it was glaringly apparent that the implementation of the servant leadership model has not been empirically studied in the public school setting. Considering that the educational leaders of tomorrow will not derive their power from position or rank as

much as they may from knowledge or wisdom, or the ability to persuade, influence, and serve others, the mission of developing purposeful schools and excellent teachers is of the utmost importance (Peterson & Kelley, 2001).

In schools, leading involves the creation of a vision, mission, and goals. The direction of positive, productive efforts toward growth and change in a public school setting should emanate from the pinnacle of the leadership pyramid, the superintendent of schools. Effective leadership in the role of the school superintendent is vital for education to meet the needs of society. Schools are charged with teaching for growth and engagement, and school superintendents are entrusted with the development and implementation of a vision that was once solely considered managerial. Effective educational leadership is changing.

Many factors have contributed to today's problem. A review of the literature indicated that educational leadership is lagging behind the corporate business community in its grasp and implementation of leadership theories that have proven to increase the leader effectiveness (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). Thus, there is a need for more effective implementation of school leadership styles and models. Although effective leadership styles have been researched, educational leaders still rely upon outdated, disconnected managerial practices that place management over leadership (Sergiovanni, 1992). Management simply seeks to protect the status quo and provide the guidelines for a school's operation (Hughes, 2002). Leadership requires a clear and compelling way to help schools achieve extraordinary results with people, through people. Spears (1996) considered the contextualized model of servant leadership as that of an inverted pyramid,

with the leader fully sustaining the needs of the entire organization. It is the vision of the servant leader that must be created, communicated, and owned by all within the organization for goals to be achieved and potential to be maximized (Greenleaf, 1996; Spears, 2004).

This researcher ought to address the problem in education through determining a population of servant leader superintendents and subsequently comparing their leadership practices to the five determined best practices. This investigation of the effectiveness of servant leadership in a school setting seeks to provide statistical research to transform interest in a belief system into a valid assessment of leadership.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study was to empirically examine the functional attributes and characteristics of self-described servant leader school superintendents in New Jersey. The characteristics of leadership required to direct schools in a time of great uncertainty (Brennan, 2007) were investigated to determine the extent to which the 10 principles of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977) exist within public school superintendents in New Jersey when analyzed in comparison to the 5 functional attributes of a true servant leader as measured by the LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2003): modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, encouraging the heart, and enabling others to act. The intent of the research was to determine the essential benefits of servant leadership as a model.

The statistical data may serve to expand and augment current knowledge in the field of leadership, with specific regard to school leadership through the lens of the

servant leadership belief system. The belief supports the need for others to serve the needs of the organization as a primary motivating factor toward the ultimate goal of achieving results through people. Greenleaf (1977) commented, “The grand design of education is to excite, rather than pretend to satisfy, an ardent thirst for information; and to enlarge the capacity of the mind, rather than to store it with knowledge, however useful” (p. 184).

Servant leadership is a practical philosophy which supports people who choose to serve first, and then lead as a way of expanding service to individuals and institutions. Servant-leaders may or may not hold formal leadership positions. Servant-leadership encourages collaboration, trust, foresight, listening, and the ethical use of power and empowerment. (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 76)

The dependent variables are generally defined as the five functional attributes of servant leadership as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI; Kouzes & Posner, 2003): modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, encouraging the heart, and enabling others to act. Control/Intervening were statistically controlled in the study. The independent variables in this study included, but were not limited to, the 10 principles of servant leaders: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community (Spears, 1996).

#### Nature of the Study

This study sought to evaluate quantitative empirical data regarding the leadership styles and skill sets of selected New Jersey school district superintendents. The target population included 586 superintendents who are members of the state’s association of school administrators. The researcher sent a random sample of 390 superintendents from

this population the Self-Assessment of Servant Leadership (SASL; Taylor, 2002) and the LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). From the 156 usable surveys that were returned, the researcher analyzed the LPIs of the 79 superintendents who self-identified as servant leaders to assess their own leadership values, methods, and beliefs in relationship to the five best practices of leadership: modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, encouraging the heart, and enabling others to act.

This study was exploratory, descriptive, and research based. It was exploratory because true servant leadership is just spawning out of infancy in the world of education (Spears, 2003). The theory still requires definition, refinement, and empirical validation. The study was descriptive in that it sought to define, determine, differentiate, and describe certain aspects of servant leadership. This study also was quantitative. The goal of the research was to collect data regarding the leadership values and characteristics of New Jersey school superintendents with the mission of categorizing them as servant leaders or nonservant leaders.

Greenleaf published his seminal works on servant leadership in the 1970s. His thoughts on the concepts of service, leadership, and stewardship of the resources of an organization were followed by a series of publications. Hence, this researcher's desire to study the concept of servant leadership for the educational realm has been sparked by the number of leaders in the field who refer to servant leadership as life altering for both the leaders and those who are being led (Spears, 1995).



## Research Questions and Hypotheses

The research questions focused on the overt behaviors, attitudes, attributes, and characteristics of school superintendents identified as servant leaders. Kouzes and Posner's (2003) LPI was designed to provide leaders with critical information of the best leadership practices as they directly correlate to the principles of servant leadership. The researcher sought to utilize the SASL (Taylor, 2002) to determine the existence of servant leadership among a sample of public school superintendents in New Jersey. The following research questions served to assess the leadership practices of identified servant leader superintendents in New Jersey:

1. Does the practice of servant leadership by public school superintendents in New Jersey (SASL) impact their perceived effectiveness in the area of modeling the way (LPI)?
2. Does the practice of servant leadership by public school superintendents in New Jersey (SASL) impact their perceived effectiveness in the area of inspiring a shared vision (LPI)?
3. Does the practice of servant leadership by public school superintendents in New Jersey (SASL) impact their perceived effectiveness in the area of challenging the process (LPI)?
4. Does the practice of servant leadership by public school superintendents in New Jersey (SASL) impact their perceived effectiveness in the area of encouraging the heart (LPI)?

5. Does the practice of servant leadership by public school superintendents in New Jersey (SASL) impact their perceived effectiveness in the area of enabling others to act (LPI)?

In these research questions, the independent variable was the leadership style of the superintendent, and the dependent variable was the functional attribute of best practice as determined by the LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2003).

The five alternate hypotheses stated that servant leaders displayed significantly different leadership behaviors than those practicing and implementing a more traditional style of leadership. Although traditional school leadership might focus on the management of staff and students, servant leadership focuses on the contributions made by leaders to establish a community that enriches the lives of its members, thus paving the way for a shared mission with common goals and values (Greenleaf, 1998). It is a lens through which the role of leadership is viewed rather than a set of skills or techniques (Spears, 2004). This philosophy of totally unselfish service to others overtly denies any form of self-interest, puts a personal agenda aside, and repositions to the forefront the needs of others within the organization.

Research has not yet established significant statistical correlations between the implementation of servant leadership by public school superintendents in New Jersey and the benefits of leading within the realm of best practice. Although leading researchers in the field of leadership have promoted the utilization of servant leadership, an accurate assessment of this style of leadership in accordance with the five principles of best practices in leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). Five null hypotheses were tested:

- H1<sub>0</sub>*: No statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant leadership when compared to public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of modeling the way.
- H2<sub>0</sub>*: No statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant leadership when compared to public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of inspiring a shared vision.
- H3<sub>0</sub>*: No statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant leadership when compared to public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of challenging the process.
- H4<sub>0</sub>*: No statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant leadership when compared to public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of enabling others to act.
- H5<sub>0</sub>*: No statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant

leadership when compared to public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of encouraging the heart

Five alternate hypotheses also were tested:

*H1<sub>A</sub>*: A statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant leadership when compared to public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of modeling the way.

*H2<sub>A</sub>*: A statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant leadership when compared to public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of inspiring a shared vision.

*H3<sub>A</sub>*: A statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant leadership when compared to public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of challenging the process.

*H4<sub>A</sub>*: A statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant leadership when compared to public school superintendents in New Jersey

who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of enabling others to act.

*H5<sub>A</sub>*: A statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant leadership when compared to public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of encouraging the heart.

Deal and Peterson (1999) stated that an educational setting very quickly takes on the personality of its leadership; the tone of the culture is something that is quickly realized by those persons who come there each day. The artistry and architecture of leadership required to lead successful schools require influence, credibility, trust, vision, and service (Bolman & Deal, 2003). All students have the right to a high-quality learning environment that meets their individual needs. Long gone are the days of a “one size fits all” model of instruction. Concomitantly, long gone are the days of a school administrator who does not stress the value of teaching children for maximum growth and engagement. Most educators are ready and able to meet this challenge.

An increasingly popular concept of leadership, in a repertoire of concepts, is the ability to put others first by infusing trust and respect, and knowing when to speak and when to listen. The needs of others and the subsequent response to those needs as a means of creating a responsive organization appear to have spawned a new theory that has extensive merit: servant leadership (Autry, 2004).

### Theoretical Foundation of the Study

In formulating a theoretical basis for studying school-based leadership, it is important to identify the essential principles of servant leadership and the functional attributes, in conjunction with defining the role of the superintendent in providing effective leadership. The theoretical basis for this study was Greenleaf's (1977) servant leadership model. Greenleaf (2002) defined servant leadership as an innovative vision for leaders to perform their duties in accordance with a belief system of services to others as the primary focus. Modern leaders' goals and objectives are to promote a service-first mentality and go far beyond any traditional form of hierarchal, authoritative management style (Greenleaf, 1977, 1991).

Servant leadership is an educational trend that encourages school leaders to self-reflect on their ability to promote change within the organization, as well as support and encourage interest in the maximization of potential with a focus on service to others (Spears, 1995). The concept of power and authority is undergoing a massive paradigm shift as it strives to enhance the quality of the professional environment for students and staff. The vision of the servant leader must be created, communicated, and owned by all within the organization for goals to be achieved and potential to be maximized (Spears, 2004; Greenleaf, 1996). Greenleaf (1977) defined servant leadership in the following manner:

The servant-leader is servant first. . . . It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then, conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. He or she is sharply different from the person who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possession. For such, it will be a later choice to serve-after leadership has been established. The leader-first and the servant first are two extreme types. Between them are the

shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature.... The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. (p. 7)

Spears (1996) distilled Greenleaf's (1977) principled beliefs into 10 characteristics: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. These characteristics are not simply traits or skills possessed by the leader; deeply investigated research has rejected what Bass and Stogdill (1990) referred to as an "approach that tended to treat personality variables in an atomistic fashion, suggesting that each trait acts singly to determine the effects of leadership" (p. 87).

Servant leaders have an intrinsic motivation that unleashes the potential of the organization and the participants to its fullest (Farnsworth & Blender, 1993; Spears, 2003). Rather, servant leadership is an ethical perspective on leadership that identifies key moral behaviors that leaders must continuously demonstrate in order to make progress on Greenleaf's principled values of leadership. The best test, which gives us the ethical ends for action, coupled with Spears's (1996, 2004) synopsis of the 10 overarching traits, identified the means and created an influential framework for a review of the literature that strongly supported the conceptual framework for servant leadership as a potential promise of achieving incredible results through people (Spears, 1994).

#### Definitions of Terms

*Empowerment:* Empowerment involves the relinquishing of traditional forms of power and the delegation of authority to others. It involves entrusting the workforce with

authority and responsibility in alignment with that authority (Kelley, 1998). With empowerment comes a certain level of accountability to the organization.

*Functional attributes:* These operative characteristics are distinct and identifiable (Kouzes & Posner, 2000). They actuate leadership responsibility. Each attribute may stand on its own, yet all of the attributes of a servant leader are interconnected in some way (Russell, 2001).

*Leadership:* Leadership is a set of skills that seek to influence people to work together enthusiastically toward goals identified for the common good. Another key to the principle of leadership is possession of character traits that inspire confidence in others. Leadership is “the how” and conversely, management involves “the what” in terms of defining the organization (Hunter, 2004).

*Pioneering:* This functional attribute of a servant leader involves the creation of new directions and new goals for the organization. The pioneer may attempt to create a new path for the organization, that is, one that may not have been ventured before. Pioneering involves taking risks.

*School culture:* A school culture is “the historically transmitted patterns of meaning that include the norms, values, beliefs, ceremonies, rituals, traditions, and myths understood, maybe in varying degrees, by members of the school community” (Stolp & Smith, 1994, p. 7).

*School district superintendent:* In New Jersey, the superintendent is the nonelected chief executive officer (CEO) of a school district. The superintendent is charged with the implementation of the board of education’s policies, procedures, and



practices (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). The superintendent of schools is the highest ranking official in each of the school districts and reports directly to the local board of education.

*Servant leader:* This type of school leader serves the needs of the school community as the primary motivation for actions and decisions. The servant leader serves first and sacrifices all personal needs for the good of the organization as a whole. This term was coined by Robert K. Greenleaf (1977), former chair of AT&T.

*Stewardship:* Stewardship is a functional characteristic of the natural servant leader. It involves assuming responsibility for taking personal care of the needs, property, and lives of another. A steward assumes a level of accountability without a corresponding level of control.

*Vision:* Vision is a view of leadership that permeates the workplace and is manifested in the actions, beliefs, values, and goals of the organization's leaders. It is a viewpoint of what is possible, given a world without boundaries in which to function (Donaldson, 2006). With vision, the organization has clear direction and a specific purpose (Senge, 2005).

### Assumptions

The study rested upon a primary assumption, namely, that servant leaders possess different personal values than those who do not function as servant leaders. The application of any belief system needs to be held to the highest critical standards, and servant leadership is no different. Servant leadership fosters a sense of autonomy and choice as it builds upon service to others. This sense of a belief in the ability and vigorous

work of others within the community can only enhance the quality of professional community of practice (Fullan, 1998). Empowering those who stand closest to the issue never allows for leaders who underestimate the worth, value, dignity, and contributions of others to the total school community (Senge, 2000; Sergiovanni, 2000; Wenger & Snyder, 2000).

Another assumption lies within the use of the two instruments, the SASL (Taylor, 2002) the LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). The researcher assumed that the use of these two instruments would allow him to identify, categorize, and analyze servant leaders for the purpose of determining the value of the theory of leadership. This was an assumption essential to the integrity of the work itself.

The researcher also assumed that all of the respondents to any and all survey questions or interview prompts would respond truthfully and to the very best of their knowledge. It also was assumed that all of the respondents were school leaders who were current and familiar with trends and issues in education. Another assumption was that all of the school leaders would morally and ethically act in accordance with their local board of education's goals, state mandates, and federal law (Kennedy, 2002). A final assumption was that all of the respondents would participate in the study of their own free will and that they would not be concerned in any way that their responses would be held in anything less than the highest level of confidentiality.

The researcher also assumed that the characteristics of the unexamined variables, those other factors beyond servant leadership, would not have a significant impact on the responses. The assumption was made that school leadership may be a key component in

assessing the success or failure of a professional learning community through the measurement of attainable outcomes (DuFour, 2004).

### Limitations and Delimitations

This study was limited to public school leaders in New Jersey who hold a valid school administrators' license. No superintendents of charter school districts or private school districts were permitted to participate. Because the study was voluntary, it was limited to those school leaders who chose to participate.

One of the most significant limitations noted in this study was the lack of a universally agreed upon definition of leadership. Because a survey permits only a superficial gauge of one person's experiences, the results of this study may not be generalized to all facets of educational leadership. As with any study, the findings may be subject to a myriad of interpretations.

To be invited to participate, the individual had to be a currently practicing, licensed superintendent in New Jersey; this study did not include individuals serving in positions in an interim capacity. To assure safeguards, the researcher obtained a list of superintendents from the New Jersey State Department of Education (NJDOE, 2008) via the county offices of education, those who represent the NJDOE in the state capitol, Trenton. Every effort was made to conduct an objective study and a bias-free analysis of the data. The researcher knew some participants in a personal or professional capacity; however, this had no impact on the findings and the results.

### Scope

This study population was limited to the of 586 practicing public school superintendents in New Jersey who report directly to their local boards of education. All sampling was random in nature, so participation in the study was not limited to one area of geographic region of this northeastern state. Because New Jersey is known for its cultural and economic diversity, the participants were representative of diverse socioeconomic and cultural cohorts. The final study sample comprised 390 public school superintendents.

### Significance of the Study

The significance of the study lies in its potential contribution to the scant body of research and existing knowledge currently available to address the problem of leadership shortages and the lack of effectiveness in educational administration. This study may add to the most recent view of leadership as an art form and the paradigm shift of putting the needs of others above the needs of the leader (Spears, 2004).

Visionary leadership is, and always has been, acknowledged as a respected and valued style of leadership in the field of educational administration (Chance, 1992). Servant leaders, according to Kouzes and Posner “have visions of what might be, and they believe that [they] can make it happen” (as cited in Chance, 1992, p. 50). Leaders have a larger purpose in that the focus is less on the work itself and more on the global vision of excellence for all (Spears, 2004). One of the hallmarks of servant leadership is the relationship between people that focuses upon mutual trust and respect, yet seeks

results in place of any egocentric recognition of the individual (Greenleaf, 2002; Spears, 1998).

### Implications for Social Change

Servant leadership implies an egoless state of being that allows the leader to focus on the needs of others toward the common good of the organization. A clear parallel can be made between this aspect of the philosophy and the milieu at Walden University. Servant leadership begins by respecting the worth, dignity, and contributions of all people at all times (Brennan, 2007; Greenleaf, 1977). Walden University (2006) defined social change as “a deliberate process of creating and applying ideas, strategies, and actions to promote the worth, dignity, and development of individuals, communities, organizations, institutions, cultures, and societies.”

Greenleaf (1978) described in detail “the leadership crisis in America” (p. 78). He argued with great fervor that colleges and universities have not prepared people to assume leadership roles within the business, education, religion, and public service/government sectors. He believed that leaders lead from their own set of internal constructs filled with individual values and beliefs. However, in his mind, the pitfall of self-interest and self-service has been responsible for the chronic crisis of organizations no longer being able to cope with the needs and demands of their very own constituencies.

Servant leadership has not undergone a critical examination within the field of educational administration. Some are critical of the plethora of expectations and how realistic it is to require the leaders to be of service to each individual as well as the whole

entity (Burbach, Barbuto, & Wheeler, 2003). As the challenges of leadership in public schools increase with mandates demanded by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), shrinking budgets, and facility shortages, the school principal is the person who is looked upon now more than ever to become the “savior toward success” (Hughes, 2002, p. 57).

At the same time, servant leadership rebukes the notion of technical management and also takes situational/collaborative models to a higher level by enhancing the growth of individuals, increasing personal involvement, and endorsing teamwork (Glanz, 2006). Thus, the phenomenon of servant leadership focuses upon the contributions of the leaders rather than a set of skills; the research from the 1970s to the 1990s focused on the overarching actions of a servant leader in the hopes of operationalizing the concept (Irving, 2004).

#### Personal Reflection

A school is an apt reflection of the passionate, compassionate, and leading-edge personnel and students who are a direct reflection of the values that we instill in them. To this researcher leader, a school exists for its students. Personal success is secondary to the success of students and staff. If they succeed, I succeed...one cannot exist without the other. The review of the literature had broadened my horizons beyond an understanding of a leadership style to the higher level of building a culture that puts theory into practice on behalf of the children served by education. I will continuously seek tangible evidence that links the leadership to the academic success of the students; in time, more studies will be examined. This study is based upon social change through personal perseverance.

Underestimating servant leadership to the status of a strategy to be used from time to time greatly devalues its potential contributions to the world of education. Rather, it is a lens in which to view the world (Greenleaf, 1977; Page & Wong, 1998). Servant leadership may look different depending upon factors such as how, where, when, and with whom the leader interacts. While adding to the literature on effective school leadership, this study may be of particular interest to boards of education who seek to create a culture that attracts and retains the best and brightest in the field. Leadership sets the tone for the culture of the school district; the role of the superintendent as CEO is one of tone setting and culture creation (Huston, 2002).

The functional attributes of servant leadership constitute the foundation for an operational definition that must first recognize that, “servant leaders must seek not to be served but rather to serve” (Matthew 20:28). Within the literature, the functional attributes of servant leadership espouse servant leadership as a valid theory for modern organizational leadership. Accordingly, the following description was the working definition of servant leadership in this study:

Servant Leaders seek not to be served, but rather to serve. They view leadership positions as opportunities to help, support, and aid other people. Servant Leaders create trusting work environments in which people are highly appreciated. They listen to and encourage followers. Servant Leaders visibly model appropriate behavior and function as effective teachers. They have a high degree of credibility as a direct result of their honesty, integrity, and competence. These persons have a clear leadership vision and implement pioneering approaches to work. Servant leaders are also conscientious stewards of resources. They have good communications with followers and exercise ethical persuasion as a means of influence. Servant Leaders invite others to participate in carrying out their leadership vision. They empower people by enabling them to perform at their best and by delegating decision-making responsibilities. Overall, servant leaders provide direction and guidance by assuming the role of attendant to humanity. (Russell, 2001, pp. 66-67)

There exists sufficient literature not only to develop the aforementioned working definition of servant leadership but also the adequate constructs to structure empirical research in the hopes of gaining valuable knowledge to transform and transmogrify the nation's schools (Keena, 2006; Milligan, 2003; Taylor, 2002). Now, the task is to take the literature and theoretical framework into the field of research.

### Summary

The purpose of this study and the research questions that guided it were outlined and discussed in chapter 1. The significance and purpose of the study also were presented. Chapter 2 presents a comprehensive review of the literature related to the phenomenon of servant leadership in education. The review describes the nature of the problem and explains the critical importance of examining the impact of servant leadership in the public school setting. The literature review also evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of previous studies of servant leadership in the public school settings in other states. The chapter closes with a summary that reiterates the main issues revealed in the literature review and presents a comprehensive interpretation of the current body of research.

Chapter 3 explains the research design and methodology for the data collection and data analysis processes. The data and the findings are presented in chapter 4 in conjunction with a comprehensive overview of the data analysis procedures. Chapter 5 concludes the study with a summary and conclusions. It also offers recommendations for future research and discusses the implications of the findings for social change.



## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

*The grand design of education is to excite, rather than pretend to satisfy, an ardent thirst for information; and to enlarge the capacity of the mind, rather than to store it with knowledge, however useful (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 184).*

### Introduction

The review of the literature that follows includes information gleaned primarily from peer-reviewed and professional journals, texts, articles, studies, dissertations, and original research. It is intended to provide the reader with an understanding of the research done, relating to the potential relationship between the behaviors identified in Greenleaf's (1977) servant leadership model and leadership effectiveness.

Given the most recent national trend of quantifying student achievement, growth, and progress, it is imperative that all possible factors relative to student growth, healthy school culture and climate, and the development of programs for children be explored more thoroughly. The NCLB is but one example of an overt effort to ensure the "bottom line." Similar to a corporate-level quarterly stock report, education continues to transform into a results-oriented business of educating students (Ferrandino, 2002). The value of data in the decision-making process is more critical than ever (Frick, 2004).

The role of the school leader is a fine balance between management and leadership (Hughes, 2002). However, the leader possesses the professional capacity and the direct link to the classroom where learning takes place. No educational goal or initiative can succeed without the direct involvement of administration (Costa & Garmston, 1994). To accomplish this goal, Sergiovanni (2005) asserted that the role of the school leader is to facilitate educational change through purposing, empowering, and

leading educational growth and change. The superintendent must transform and transmogrify the school culture by acting as a servant leader and empowering others...shifting the balance of power from bureaucratic management to a more collaborative leadership model (Glanz, 2006).

Leaders cannot change the value system of individuals, but they can attempt to mold and shape behaviors and actions (Hunter, 2004). A strong correlation between servant leadership and overall school climate could indicate its importance within the education setting (Glanz, 2006). The behaviors and attributes of servant leaders tend to have great influence on the way teachers feel about and perceive the value of their work (Greenfield, 2004). They become the most powerful and transformational when this investment in the community yields significant results. Kelley (1998) stated, "Followers actually contribute about 90 percent to the success of any organizational outcomes, while leaders account for only about 10 percent" (p. 170).

### Leadership

Traditional forms of leadership within the school setting have tended to focus on the management of the total school environment (Senge, 2005). Conversely, the role of the servant leader is to serve the needs of others as a primary motivation for facilitating change within a complex culture (Greenleaf, 1991). Sergiovanni (2005) suggested that a *school* leader strive to become a *servant* leader. Through purposeful empowerment and leadership by paradigm shifting, superintendents learn how to serve the school first and themselves second, if at all.

The role of the leader is to increase the leadership capacity and ability of staff members to create teacher leadership from within the school (Hughes, 2002). The hallmarks of the superintendent who acts as a servant leader is celebrated in a leader who provides the vision and the resources to keep the school moving in a progressive direction (Greenleaf, 2002). Wenger (1998) explained that servant leadership in the school setting is rooted in honoring and respecting the needs of others, highlighting personal integrity, and focusing on the importance of social equality for all facets of school and community.

Servant leadership is emerging on a grand scale in many parts of the world (Hunter, 2004). Although there is evidence that many of the most admired and successful organizations, especially business and religious organizations, are now practicing the disciplines of servant leadership, there has been a lack of substantive research into the examination within the field of educational administration (Anderson, 2005). As the pressure of high-stakes testing combines with the power of technological advances, school leadership faces an insurmountable increase in accountability. According to Leithwood and Reihl (2003), school leaders are being held accountable “not only for the structures and processes they establish, but also for the performance of those under their charge” (p. 3). They also suggested the measurement of student outcomes and teacher or administrator leadership may now be linked more directly. Leithwood and Reihl stated:

Schools and school systems are under increasing pressure to perform. State and national achievement standards focused on ambitious learning for all children have changed the landscape of educational accountability. While the real intentions or likely results of such accountability systems may be questions whose impact is inarguable. Pressure is being placed on actors at all levels, from students themselves to teachers, principals, and superintendents, district leaders, to produce documented evidence of successful performance. (p. 4)

The NCLB has raised the accountability for those who serve in public education. Under the NCLB, school administrators are faced with accountability and assessment, ensuring student success in core content areas, providing a safe school, managing special education needs, meeting state mandates, and protecting the rights and interests of the school community. In addition, school administrators are responsible for enhancing teacher quality by addressing recruitment and evaluation, and providing professional development. These demands, coupled with overwhelming situations of increased diversity, poverty, and conflicting social values, impact no one more than the school staff. School districts require effective and dynamic leadership skills to meet the challenges facing schools (Autry, 2004).

Covey (1996) asserted that there is a growing consciousness regarding servant leadership around the world. He asserted that we need to produce more for less and with greater speed than we have ever done before. He commented:

The only way to do that in a sustained way is through the empowerment of people. And, the only way you get empowerment is through high trust cultures and an empowerment philosophy that turns bosses into servants and coaches, and structures and systems into nurturing institutionalized servant processes. (p. 2)

Global organizations are changing their attitudes toward leadership, people, and relationships. In *Fortune's* 2003 list of "100 Best Companies to Work For," more than one third of the organizations identified servant leadership as a core operating principle, and 4 of the top 5 on the list purposely practiced servant leadership (as cited in Hunter, 2004).

Although there is vast information about servant leadership, there is little information that relates servant leadership to public school superintendents (Huston,

2002). Two decades ago, the Commission on Educational Excellence (1982, as cited in Glass, 1992) specifically recommended strong leadership as a means for school improvement. Top-down educational leadership and administrative structures were blamed primarily for the shortcomings of public education. Servant leadership rebuked the notion of this authoritative management and provided a model that enhances the growth of the individuals and promotes team building (McCrimmon, 2008). Thus, a superintendent as a servant leader may have the potential to impact the school culture in a unique manner. The ability or inability to move a school organization forward depends on the school leader; therefore, in comparison to the nonservant leader, the leader as servant may excel by inspiring the school organization to work collectively to achieve its goals (Chopra, 2002).

One of Greenleaf's basic premises about servant leadership is that the work exists as much for the person as the person exists for the work (as cited in Spears, 1995). De Pree (1989) referred to the leader as a debtor with the opportunity to serve the community. He asserted that the first responsibility of the leader is to define clearly and concisely the reality under which people will perform their duties.

Page and Wong (1998) expressed that many in the field of educational leadership have attempted to explain, apply, and even extend the notion of servant leadership in its purest form. At the core, the servant leadership model is the ability to turn the traditional hierarchal power structure upside down (Spears, 2003). The movement of putting others first can be traced to the Bible: "And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matthew 20:27). Huston (2002) commented on the overt connection between

Greenleaf's servant leadership model and the spiritual side of leadership, stating, "It is difficult to reconcile the work of leaders as strictly management when so much of it deals with the aspirations and dreams of people, when so much of it affirms or denies their very essence" (p. 6).

### The Original Servant Leader

According to Greenleaf's close friend and colleague, Bill Bottum, Greenleaf claimed that he had the image of Jesus washing his disciples' feet at the forefront of his thoughts when he created the servant leader model (Frick, 2004). In his vision of servant leadership, Greenleaf was more interested in the value of personal experience than in doctrine; his writings were more concerned with remaining steadfast and true to the spirit of life-altering leadership and impacting the lives of others than one specific religious figure (as cited in Spears, 2004). He did not want it to appear that servant leadership is a function of religious tradition; rather, Frick (2004) contended that Greenleaf took a spiritual concept, distilled it, and applied it in fresh ways to meet the needs of human beings within complex organizations. Leadership is about influence and the ability to influence others; from a pragmatic perspective, the true leader serves all of the needs of an organization as well as the people within it. Schools, like businesses, have an epicenter that will be filled with any person if it is not occupied by the right person.

Spears (1995) asserted that Greenleaf perseverated on the notion that most kings in history sent their people out to die for them; conversely, Jesus was the one king he (Greenleaf) knew who actually died for his people. This act of total unselfishness fascinated Greenleaf, and he would scoff at people simply referring to Jesus as an entity

as opposed to the act of ultimate sacrifice which displayed His true character (as cited in Spears, 2004). In presenting the 10 servant leadership principles, Spears (1996) affirmed that Jesus was “the ultimate in turning the leadership pyramid upside-down” (p. 27) and was the only religious figure he could identify who knew how to build a true management team. Thus, Spears (1996, 2003) consistently referred to Jesus as the original servant leader.

In the case of Jesus, the power of the subordinates’ actions when the leader is present paled in comparison to the manner in which they act in the leader’s absence. At the core of His teachings was the credibility of the leader and the integrity of the leadership in word and action. Greenleaf was not a Christian, but he held to the conviction that the message of service applied to all people of all religions and cultures, and he carefully avoided overt religious references that would make anyone feel excluded. The connections to Jesus were in the conditions of his principles, but they were not at the forefront his essays (Keena, 2006). However, Greenleaf was deeply inspired by the actions of Jesus depicted in the Bible (as cited in Spears, 1996).

As the most recognized collection of religious writings, the Bible contains a plethora of examples and stories of Jesus’s implementation of the principles of servant leadership. Jesus did not lead from behind; He stood out in front, even in the face of great adversity (Greenleaf, 1977). Jesus was the first to rotate the leadership pyramid upside-down to exemplify his deep respect for others. He was the definitive servant leader (Maxwell, 1996; Scott, 2002). Servant leadership is measured by its impact on others to

grow as persons while being served, while providing the modeling for them to lead by that example.

Maxwell (1996) suggested that one can be a servant, but not a leader, or a leader, but not a servant. To ascend to the level of a servant leader, one must serve as a leader by leading in a way that puts the needs of those being served at the forefront of all actions and decisions. Maxwell argued that a leader ceases to be a servant leader at the very moment when the right attitude is lost on a meaningless endeavor, that is, when the bringing about of positive change has disappeared.

The power of service is based upon the alignment of follower motivation and commitment to global organizational goals. A service implies that this power is shared with the followers and is used to cultivate their autonomy, not to coerce or manipulate them. Serving promotes positional changes between leaders and followers. Great leaders have the ability to transform their interested and able followers into future productive leaders (Autry, 2004).

#### Servant Leadership Defined

Greenleaf (1977) conceptualized new ways in which to mold the structure of leadership within an organization and the process of decision making into a structure that could meet the challenges of the new century. He stated that servant leadership “emphasizes increased service to others, a holistic approach to work promoting a sense of community, and the sharing of power in decision-making” (p. 337). Servant leadership places an importance on the leader’s ability and willingness to listen and learn. It is challenging to employ any of the other characteristics of servant leadership successfully



without being an effective listener. Leaders are traditionally valued for their communication and decision-making skills; however, although these skills are important for the servant leader, they are strengthened by a strong commitment to listening intently to others (Nicholl, 1986). Active listening provides not only a medium for sharing information but also the opportunity to build relationships. Greenleaf wrote, “The best test of whether leaders are communicating at the depth the servant leader style advocates, is for leaders to ask themselves if they are really listening to their subordinates” (p. 21).

#### Principles of Servant Leadership

After an exhaustive and careful consideration of Greenleaf’s original writings, Spears (2003) identified 10 principles that he considered essential to the development and implementation of Greenleaf’s (1977) servant leadership model: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, building community, and commitment to the growth of an organization. The 10 principles were not intended to encapsulate all of the power and promise of servant leadership; however, they did encapsulate the beliefs of the original creator of the notion of service to others as a steward of the resources (Spears, 1995).

#### *Listening*

Listening involves the act of hearing with attentiveness, paying close attention, and receiving a message with genuine concern (Taylor, 2002). The art of listening shows a deep intent to gain clarity and response to a person’s needs. The servant leader is an active and astute listener who wishes to glean insight into the will of a group. It involves not only hearing what is being said but also what is not being said (Greenleaf, 1996).

Listening, coupled with regular periods of reflection, is essential to the growth of the servant leader and, ultimately, the growth of the organization of a whole (Spears, 2004).

### *Empathy*

An overarching goal of servant leaders is to understand and identify with the feelings of others. Empathy is based upon the intellectual identification of the feelings, thoughts, and emotions of others within an organization. At times, servant leaders must live vicariously through those with whom they serve (Spears, 2004). The pinnacle of the achievement of servant leaders is to become totally empathetic listeners whose skills in receptive listening show good human intentions and foster deep personal connections (Greenleaf, 1996).

### *Healing*

One of the major strengths of servant leaders is the innate ability to allow an organization, a person, or a situation to heal, that is, to become well again. People realize that others may sometimes have a sense of broken spirit and may have suffered from an emotional hurt that impedes their ability to perform at an optimal level (Spears, 2004). Greenleaf (1991) wrote, “There is something subtle communicated to one who is being served and led if, implicit in the compact between the servant-leader, and the led, is the understanding that the search for wholeness is something that they have inside” (p. 27).

### *Awareness*

Servant leaders must continuously remain informed, cognizant, and knowledgeable. A sign of their strength is their level of awareness of self as well as their level of awareness about the organization. Awareness is a connectedness to the

organization that is either perceived or realized by those members of the group who perform the tasks on a daily basis that keep the system functioning. Disconnected leader cannot be performing at an optimal level (Hughes, 2002).

### *Persuasion*

Servant leaders practice persuasion on a constant basis by getting people to do things upon the advisement or urging of the leader. True servant leaders do not assert or boast a level of authority; rather, they become masters at the art of persuasion. Positional authority is replaced with an element of finesse that convinces, not coerces, others to comply (Spears, 2004). A manager or a boss gives orders, whereas a servant leader is effective at building a sense of consensus within the group setting and sees that tasks are accomplished and goals are achieved. Servant leaders are masterful persuaders in convincing people to work alongside them to meet or exceed the goals of the organization. In many ways, this characteristic is an innate and inherent gift of natural leadership (Wheatley, 1999).

### *Conceptualization*

Servant leaders know how to dream big (Sergiovanni, 2005). They have the unique ability to look at an organization, system, or a problem, and form a notion by mentally combining all of its characteristics or particulars (Senge, 2000). Servant leaders think beyond the scope and sequence of the mundane, day-to-day realities within an establishment; they have a mental discipline that requires practice and focus (Laub, 1999). More traditional managers are focused on short-term goals and objectives;

conversely, servant leaders stretch the thought process to include long-term initiatives.

These leaders can seek the balance between the short-term and the long-term goals.

### *Foresight*

Servant leaders look forward and care for the future; they are able to foresee the potential future outcomes of decisions. They have an internal set of constructs that naturally allows them to complete many permutations about how a situation may find resolve. Foresight also is a characteristic that allows servant leaders to learn lessons from the past, capture the realities of the present, and understand the consequences of future actions (Greenleaf, 1996; Spears, 2004). Foresight is very much the lead, the unique position that leaders have; leaders do not react, rather, they anticipate based upon many variables (Sergiovanni, 2005).

### *Stewardship*

Stewardship is perhaps one of the most significant and vital characteristics of the servant leader. It is the holding of something in trust for another (Greenleaf, 1996). Stewardship is largely rooted in a deep and enduring commitment to serving the needs of others with little regard for the needs of self. Greenleaf's fundamental core values placed the role of the leader as a steward of the resources, the person who is trusted to ensure that the organization serves the needs of its community, now and well into the future (Greenleaf, 2002; Kelley, 1998; Spears, 2004). The servant leader continues to promulgate the view of the organization as an integral part of the global community, with the belief that it also must have a positive impact on the world at large (Laub, 1999).

### *Commitment to the Growth of People*

Servant leaders believe that people have an intrinsic value beyond their tangible contributions as workers. As such, servant leaders are deeply committed to the personal, professional, and spiritual growth of each individual within the organization. They recognize that no good can be accomplished without others and that they are only as powerful as those whom they can work through. It is the role of the leader to take an active interest in people on a personal and professional level; the servant leader will care what others can contribute and will never underestimate the value of each person's contribution to the global milieu.

### *Building Community*

Servant leaders are aware that the shift from local communities to large institutions as the primary shaper of human lives has changed our perceptions and caused a sense of loss. Servant leaders seek to identify a means for building community among those who work within a given institution. Greenleaf (1977) stated:

All that is needed to rebuild community as a viable life form, for large numbers of people, is for enough servant leaders to show the way, not by mass movements, but by each servant leader demonstrating his own unlimited liability for a quite specific community-related group. (p. 30)

There is little doubt that many other principles are exhibited by truly effective servant leaders. However, these 10 principles of servant leadership provide us with a place to begin self-examination and a time to reflect upon values and our actions.

As the application of stewardship evolved, the paradigm began to illustrate the separation of leadership from management (Spears, 2004). As the leader became the servant, a level of service to the entire community was necessary. Rost (1993) outlined

four essential elements to accomplish this level of service as chief steward of all resources: “a relationship based on influence, leaders and followers develop that relationship, they intend real changes, and they have mutual purposes” (p. 127).

It is natural and unavoidable for the servant leader to have a spiritual component or dimension to the leadership style (Hunter, 2004). To understand the needs of their followers and provide for those needs, servant leaders seek to make a difference in the lives of those whom they can influence in a positive manner (Fullan, 2001). The servant leaders in the school setting seek to transform the learning conditions of students to maximize growth, commitment, and engagement. They also are looking to consistently foster opportunities for the “followers to be followed” (Fullan, 2001, p. 14) and the constant spawning of leadership (Fullan, 2001).

Servant school leaders contribute to reducing achievement gaps, making differences in the lives of students, and supporting the very best in humanity (Spears, 2003). This type of leader is the epitome of selfless. Chopra (2002) issued harsh words regarding the self-possessed leader, one who is interested in self over others, asserting that such a leader will “fail to fulfill the lives” of those who follow (p. 11). The litmus test of servant leadership is to assess whether those led have experienced “growth as persons” within the context of their workplace. The value of the skill set is the aspect of the experience that those led can translate into context from their own perspective (Greenleaf, 1996; Laub, 1999).

Servant leaders focus on the development and maintenance of a spirit of community within the school setting, which involves the complete care and nurturing of

those within that community (Greenleaf, 1977). Leadership within a school becomes decentralized, and the needs of the school community are addressed in a shared governance fashion, with equal contributions from administration and faculty. In such cases, the leader also can be led by the ideas of others who share common goals and outcomes to enhance the entire school community (Hughes, 2002).

### Leadership Within Schools

Schulman (2002) studied the impact of school-based leadership styles, school climate, and level of student achievement, concluding that “leadership is difficult to measure as a predictor of student achievement. The link between [school] leader and [student] achievement is highly complex and indirect” (p. 143). At the same time, Heck (1996) stated, “The leader’s role, therefore, is one key part of an organizational milieu emphasizing the importance of the school’s social context and its personnel in shaping organizational processes” (pp. 74-75). The district superintendent is not responsible for the daily delivery of instruction, but is responsible for the tone of the climate that is established for those whose lives are impacted each day (Hughes, 2002; Sergiovanni, 1992).

Senge (2000) affirmed that the purpose of a classroom is to gather students and teachers with a core mission of learning. He cited the existence of a “mutual influence” (p. 12) among the key partners in learning: students, parents, and teachers. Principals are the instructional leaders of the schools in which they set the tone for learning.

Superintendents are the chief executive agents of the board of education. The leader is the fulcrum of the process, more than just a supervisor, but actually a steward of the learning

process as a whole (Bowden, 2007). The servant leader puts all of the pieces into place to assure that the culture of the school embraces and promotes learning as everyone's main mission (Senge, 2000).

De Pree (1989) referred to leadership with a purpose for all as an art form.

Leaders as artists can free people and remove all obstacles to allow them to perform their roles at peak capacities. Servant leaders also are adept at recognizing the need to build capacity from within and a culture of shared governance. However, there need to be leaders, and the attribute of true leaders lies in their ability to remain in positions that pave the way for others. The innate leaders are adept, at least more than most, at pointing out the direction and showing the way for others (Greenleaf, 1977). Greenleaf emphatically stated:

As long as one is leading, one always has a goal. It may be a goal arrived at by group consensus, or the leader, acting on inspiration, may simply have said, "Let's go this way." But, it is the leader who always knows what is and can articulate it for any [within the organization] who are unsure. By clearly stating and restating the goal, the leader gives certainty to others who may have difficulty in achievement it for themselves. (p. 29)

Every achievement starts out with a clearly developed, stated, and articulated goal. However, the goal is actually less important than the one who states it. The one stating it must automatically elicit trust, respect, and confidence (Greenleaf, 1977, 1991; Hughes, 2000). In the educational setting, the goal must be at the center of a process, and it must permit the leadership to be an overt and active contributor in the trenches with the professional staff. Deal and Peterson (1999) stated that an educational setting very quickly takes on the personality of its leadership. The tone of the culture is something that is quickly realized by those persons who perform a service to the school community



within an intellectually safe environment. A positive and inclusive school climate will enhance the level of dedication and participation toward a commonly understood mission (Hunter, 2004).

The artistry and architecture of leadership required to lead successful schools requires influence, credibility, trust, vision, and service (Bolman & Deal, 2003). An increasingly popular concept of leadership from among a repertoire of concepts is the ability to put others first, infusing trust and respect, and knowing when to speak and when to listen. Knowing the needs of others and subsequently reacting to those needs, as a means of creating a responsive organization appear to have spawned a new model that has extensive merit: the servant leader (Blanchard, 1996). Laub (1999) asserted that servant leadership is a theoretical model of leadership practice that when operationalized as a leadership model provides an opportunity for tremendous yet laborious influence within an organization.

Servant leadership is an educational trend that seeks to encourage today's school leaders to self-reflect on their ability to promote change within the organization, as well as support and encourage interest in the maximization of potential with a focus on service to others (Spears, 1995). The concept of power and authority is undergoing a massive paradigm shift as this approach seeks to enhance the quality of the professional environment for students and staff. Greenleaf (2002) defined servant leadership as an innovative vision for the leader to perform professional duties in accordance with a belief system of services to others as the primary focus. The modern leader's goals and

objectives are to promote a service-first mentality and go far beyond any traditional form of hierarchal, authoritative management style (Greenleaf, 1977, 1991).

Inherent in any conceptual development is the influence of the founder. The concept of servant leadership was developed by Greenleaf. Greenleaf's humble beginnings in Terra Haute, Indiana, in 1904 set the stage for his deep commitment to leadership as a means of success (Spears, 2004). His father, a union leader and organizer, was a central figure and role model in his life, as depicted by his statement, "In the perspective of considerable experience, my father stands as a true servant" (as cited in Spears, 1995, p. 17). Upon graduation from college, Greenleaf accepted a position with AT&T largely based upon his feelings that "AT&T was the largest" (as cited in Spears, 1995, p. 18). During his 40 years with the company, he gained virtually every conceivable form of leadership experience in the areas of management, research, development, and education (Spears, 1995).

In his essays, Greenleaf (1977) explained that "servant-leadership is a paradox due to the fact that the words, 'servant' and 'leader', are opposites" (p. 208). The traditional image of a "leader" depicts one who is in control and at the forefront of all decisions (Spears, 1998). The "servant" is one who is submissive and working in the service of another. Servant leadership is different from other leadership philosophies because it encourages leaders to place the focus of importance upon the needs of others. However, the true value of the model is that it attempts to virtually eliminate a leader's sense of concern for self. This selfless form of leadership is constructive because it builds trusting relationships within an organization (Anderson, 2005). Greenleaf (2004) strongly

supported the notion that servant leadership is both a responsibility and an obligation to serve. As a concept, servant leadership has gained some respectable degree of acceptance in the corporate world (Spears, 1998). In 1998, *Fortune Magazine* stated that

Servant leadership works like the consensus building that the Japanese are famous for. Yes, it takes a while on the front end; everyone's view is solicited, though everyone also understands that his/her view may not ultimately prevail. But, once the consensus is forged, watch out: With everyone on board, your so-called implementation proceeds wham-bam. (as cited in Spears, p. 13)

In the educational leadership realm, theorists such as Sergiovanni (1992, 2000), have referenced servant leadership as a means by which administrators and those in informal leadership roles can get the legitimacy to lead. According to Greenleaf (1977), "We convince by our presence" (p. 329). Because servant leadership is a transformational long-term approach to life's work, there is no doubt that it has the great potential to create positive social change throughout our entire society (Spears, 1998).

Schools hold a great formal and informal power in the social change mission (De Pree, 1989). Those who enter education make a fundamental choice to enable true leadership, that is, the choice to serve life (Schwahn & Spady, 1998). In reference to this notion of serving the future through education, Schwahn and Spady referred to it as the concept of "total leadership. Because leadership is about creating and sustaining positive and productive social change, it can't succeed without service leadership" (p. 103). Epps (2002) referred to the role of the superintendent as the CEO of service to the organization's declared purpose and vision.

## Historical Overview of the Superintendency

The first known appointment of a true superintendent of schools occurred in the early 1800s in Buffalo, New York. Toward the end of that decade, there were approximately 27 official superintendents in the nation. A majority of them were leading large metropolitan school districts (Glass, 1992). Although the original role of the superintendent was to serve as headmaster, many educational leaders were taught a limited skill set of ways to manage the teaching staff (Spring, 1997). According to Glass, “The growth of the superintendency paralleled the growth of the public schools, and was inextricably linked to the evolution of school boards” (p. 1). In most respects, school superintendents were known as true school reformers, and in some regards, “the secular clergy” (Glass, 1992, p. 1).

By the 1920s, most states had infrastructural guidelines for the operation of schools and school districts. As such, the bureaucracy began to grow with a system with clear lines of authority and a set hierarchal structure. The top-down approach to educational leadership was born with a sense of management of the resources to meet the needs of the students. The role of the central office administration continued to overshadow the very schools that they were charged with supporting in the educational process (Tyack & Hanson, 1982).

In the middle of the century, political forces shrouded in the rights of minorities, and women first made the point that schools should be more reflective of society. Through the electoral process, school boards became more reflective of the communities

they served and began to replace some of the distrust with a healthy balance of management and leadership.

School superintendents were on the management side of the equation for many decades until the publication of the *A Nation at Risk* (as cited in Glass, 1992). The effectiveness of public education was now at the core of a national debate. In the 1990s, the infusion of school choice established the growth of competition within a business that was mostly a monopoly, forcing educational leaders to become more focused on the needs of the customer (Kozol, 1991).

When the mission changes, visionary leaders must reform their management style in preparation of a future citizenry. Social change, coupled with a decreased confidence in the public school system, forces the superintendents to reposition themselves as educational/instructional leaders (Kozol, 1991). The new process of continuous school improvement requires the involvement of superintendents to identify and challenge what groups have held as commonly accepted beliefs and values in education (Schlechty, 1997; Trimble, 1996). To promote change and movement toward educational excellence, superintendents communicate through organizational members, an inclination toward shared beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes (Kowalski, 2005).

Carter and Cunningham (1997) stated the need for today's superintendents of schools to work bottom-up, no longer top-down. In providing direction by nurturing, facilitating, and supporting the educational process, school superintendents are the servant leaders, the stewards of the resources. In connecting the role of superintendent to that of servant leader, Carter and Cunningham stated:

Superintendents must position themselves to talk persuasively about results and the promotion of a sense of purpose. In doing so, they should focus on outcomes, taking risks, and investing themselves in other people. They will learn by doing and empowering other people and the process [itself]. They must dream of what can be, and not be distracted by nor worry about what has been. They will need to enlist the support of everyone needed to make the system work. All who have a stake in the vision of a successful school district must be involved in some way. Effective superintendents will be expected to encourage others to act and to lead. In short, superintendent must provide the conditions that enable the leadership to emerge, producing extraordinary results. (p. 239)

### School Superintendents as Educational Leaders

A nexus between effective communication and practice is not limited to education. Recent studies have shown that superintendents who experience a tremendous resistance to change also are ineffective communicators (Perina, 2002). It is paramount that school superintendents have the responsibility of building a more inclusive school culture in order to gain support and promote an understanding of the district's mission (Riehl, 2000). The creation of a shared vision requires a level of service on the part of the superintendent to all facets of school and community. The superintendent is the face of the school system and can set the tone, climate, and image while providing an essential framework for daily operations (Kowalski, 2004).

As servant leaders, educational leaders have boundless opportunities to serve as facilitator and effectively influence their communities of practice. The burden of leadership can be shared with other members of the school community with the purpose of building shared values that transform the school from a mere organization to a conventional community (Malphurs, 2004). As stewards of the resources, servant leaders serve by giving direction, a basic structure, and support to exert influence (Sergiovanni, 1992).

Block (2003), a business executive, stated that the education system necessitates partnership, power, and service in order to provide leadership for mutual purposes. Thus, educational leaders, the servant leaders, can give to others over any form of self-interest while preserving the concept of independence in society and in ourselves. Block (1996) asserted that this sense of ownership in serving the need for social change is the most powerful when there is a notion of ownership and accountability of personal performance.

Kouzes and Posner (2000) referred to much the same processes as did Block (1996). Their emphasis on encouraging the heart addresses the spiritual needs of people because it fosters a sense of collaboration among them. The strengthening of others is akin to Block's concepts of empowerment and service. To gain a quantitative assessment of leaders, Kouzes and Posner developed the LPI to gauge leadership. They designed the LPI through extensive research on best practices in leadership and provided practical information regarding the effectiveness of leadership practices. Kouzes and Posner's (2002) research led to the identification of five attributes that are critical to the majority of best leadership practices: modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, encouraging the heart, and enabling others to act.

Greenleaf (1977, 1991, 1996) specifically lectured on the tenets and responsibilities of being a servant leader in education. An essential component of the public education system must be the creation of a learner-focused approach that puts the needs of the students above all else. Servant leadership thrives on action and interaction of solidarity among one and all (Spears, 1998). To link the meaningful concepts of

servant leadership to the public education system, our service to children must be at the forefront of all of our actions as professional educators. This focus on student growth and engagement is the pinnacle of the concept of a school that serves its essential purpose. School leaders who act in the servant leadership capacity provide direction, exert influence, and place things in proper order and context for school personnel who impact the lives of students (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). No one person can have a greater impact on the culture, climate, and academic achievement of a school than the building leader.

The role of the leader is to set an example and to model the very best in professionalism and personal action on a daily basis (Heck, 1996). Wheatley (1999) supported and furthered this notion that schools are not machines; rather, they are living organisms that require trust, freedom, and inspiration to adapt to changing times. She asserted that the source of energy within an organization is the free flow of ideas and information that acts as a true catalyst for change. A school system is more apt to change if it remains open to new ideas from both the inside and the outside to meet, achieve, and eventually exceed its goals and objectives (Wheatley, 1999).

The potential for future leadership is another goal of the servant leader. The goal is to create a culture in which the absence of the servant leader does not effect the operations as others are prepared to step in and lead, be it formally or informally. A servant leader creates an active succession plan for the future; it is of prime responsibility to the school culture (De Pree, 1989; Greenleaf, 1977; Wheatley, 1999).

In this time of increasing demands, expectations, and performance by a multitude of constituencies, the need to identify great leaders has never been such a high priority in



the realm of education (Sergiovanni, 1992). Leadership has a direct impact upon a school culture and climate relative to the achievement of goals and objectives through the professionals who are mentored, supervised, and guided (Greenleaf, 1996). The notion of a school culture was transferred from the corporate environment to the world of education with the conception that it would facilitate the development of a more efficient, focused, and stable learning environment for students and staff (Deal, 1993).

A school culture can be defined as “the historically transmitted patterns of meaning that include the norms, values, beliefs, ceremonies, rituals, traditions, and myths understood, maybe in varying degrees, by members of the school community” (Stolp & Smith, 1994, p. 7). As the culture of the school evolves, so does the vision of that school as a way to serve its greater purpose, that is, the creation of a vision, which is not a static event (Block, 1996). Greenleaf (1977) wrote that a

New moral principle is emerging, which holds that the only authority deserving one’s allegiance is that which is freely and knowingly granted by the led to the leader in response to, and in proportion to, the clearly evident servant stature of the leader. (p. 46)

In this paradigm shift in the world of evolving leadership styles and practices, the servant leader’s motivation begins with service to others and ends with service to others. Service is the cornerstone of this philosophy (Spears, 2004).

#### Five Functional Attributes of Servant Leadership

Kouzes and Posner (2000) asserted that inherent in the leadership practices of the superintendent are five essential functional attributes of servant leaders. The LPI measures five leadership characteristics that are the “five fundamental practices of

exemplary leadership” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 8). The following section defines each attribute:

### *Inspiring a Shared Vision*

One of the hallmarks of leaders is the innate belief and unconditional notion that they can make a difference through others (Laub, 1999). Leaders envision the future, creating an ideal image of the greatest possible potential of the organization. They have an irrational sense of hope for the future (Autry, 2004). Leaders seek to enlist others in their dreams as they breathe life into their visions and provide people with an enthusiastic setting in which they can do their very best work (Laub, 1999). The inspiration of a shared vision serves as a “hook” to maximize the active participation in the shared governance in the organization toward common goals.

### *Modeling the Way*

Leaders are charged with the creation of a set of standards that determine how goals should be pursued (Autry, 2004). Leaders also set an example for others to follow in words, actions, thoughts, and other overt behaviors. Leaders set the tone (Spears, 2003). In conjunction with the aforementioned, leaders chart a course of small benchmarks that relate to the achievement of larger goals and objectives. As the original servant leader, Jesus taught by example and modeled the role of the servant. His constant and continual model of ministry was an illustration of His love and commitment to His people (Jones, 2005).

### *Challenging the Process*

True leaders seek and relish in the opportunity to change the status quo (Hughes, 2002). The pinnacle of leadership achievement is to call something into question by demanding an explanation, justification, or proof that seeks to stimulate the intellect of the followers (Greenleaf, 1977; McCrimmon, 2008). Leaders know that risk taking involves mistakes and failures, and that professional judgment occasionally results in disappointments. Servant leaders are content to live with setbacks as long as the ultimate goals of success are achievement (Autry, 2004). Again, Jesus's commitment to his people through His work allowed them to challenge Him in a respectful manner as He held true to a precise mission for His work (Jones, 2005).

### *Encouraging the Heart*

Leaders begin with the mindset of illustrating great personal respect for the worth, dignity, and contributions of every person. To accomplish extraordinary goals, true leaders know that their best work is done through and with people. People in servant-led organizations are made to feel like heroes as they are given the gifts of hope, courage, and confidence. Leaders motivate followers to take certain courses of action in the hope that something good will occur (McCrimmon, 2008). As a role model for encouragement, Jesus extended love and appreciation to all people; leaders celebrate others' success is their success (Jones, 2005).

### *Enabling Others to Act*

Leaders foster a sense of collaboration rather than competition; they built spirited teams and understand that mutual respect is the cornerstone of any productive

relationship. They provide their people with the intangible tools necessary to feel capable and empowered. Jesus opted to empower His disciples rather than stay with them: “It is for your own good that I am going away” (John 16:7).

These five functional attributes, as shown in Table 1, correlate specifically to the five attributes of servant leadership are the focus of this qualitative investigation. In his study, Russell (2001) connected the attributes of Greenleaf’s servant leadership model to the equivalent LPI attribute titles as measured by Kouzes and Posner (2000).

Table 1

*Correlation of Servant Leader and LPI Attribute Categories*

Servant leadership attribute	Equivalent LPI measurable attribute title
Vision	Inspiring a shared vision
Modeling	Modeling the way
Pioneering	Challenging the process
Appreciation of others	Encouraging the heart
Empowerment	Enabling others to act

### Leadership Effectiveness

The goal of a coherent vision is to serve as the driving force of an idea and a set of values that the organization mutually accepts as guiding policy and practice (Senge, 1990). It is the role of the superintendent to serve the local school community in setting the tone for excellence. The words and actions of the school leader often are under the highest scrutiny and subject to the intense interpretation of others within the boundaries of the school (Fullan, 1993). For education to develop and meet the needs of a growing and evolving society, excellent leadership is paramount to the achievement of the overarching goal of social change (Trimble, 1996).

The potential to foster and create future leadership is another goal of the servant leader. Greenleaf (1977) had strong words for the role of preparing the future core of leaders:

I fault it [the educational enterprise] for the refusal to offer explicit preparation for leadership to those who have the potential for it. Not only do educators seem passive about it, but, I suspect that some influential educators not only denigrate leadership but administer what has been called an anti-leadership vaccine. The resistance to encouraging the growth of leadership from within is so formidable that there seems to be no other way to account for it. (pp. 176-177)

The role of the teacher leader is a critical component to the success and perception of shared governance in a school setting. Throughout this nation, educational leadership is being harshly scrutinized by those being led, namely, the teachers in the school.

Traditional forms and models of leadership are perceived as authoritarian and severely lacking in overt participation on the part of professional classroom educators. Teacher empowerment is a purposeful and planned effort. The best service that a school can render to its own people is to facilitate opportunities to assert a positive mutual influence over their colleagues. Empowering teachers as leaders is a way to maintain quality personnel and provide for learning experiences for future growth (Jones, 2005; Greenleaf, 1977).

Although many highly regarded researchers in the literature review supported the servant leadership model, like any other concept or idea, it has not been without criticism. Greenleaf (1977) touted servant leadership as a belief system for leadership that borders upon a religion for leading an organization with little room for interference from alternative approaches.

Although no leadership style is the best for every situation, there are times when it is necessary for safety or security that the leader remain a complete and total autocrat (Glanz, 2006). Spears (1998) contended that a large number of prominent researchers and leaders have viewed servant leadership as a superior model of leading an organization to greatness with a focus on collaboration. Yet, Tatum (1995) viewed the concept of total servant leadership as weak and not a position that can be taken immediately when people are new to a situation. It takes time for them to assume a position of great respect when they are new to a position and have little idea of whom it is they are to serve. Page and Wong (1998) suggested that servant leadership makes it difficult to manage because there is an assumption that all forms of political and positional power must be given away as the person in charge simply becomes one of the masses.

Although there has been a plethora of research into the subject of leadership, society is no closer to understanding true leadership than it was a decade ago (Bennis & Nanus, 1997). Thus, leadership styles are not always obvious and blatant; they can take on many forms in the private sector and in the public school setting. Though servant leadership has been written about and practiced by many, it has been limited in its systematic implementation within a school district. Most school leadership has been research based and has followed a set hierarchy of positions and bureaucracy (Donaldson, 2006; Hughes, 2002). Politics and bureaucracy get in the way, and many school leaders say they have to work around the system to get things done (Schulman, 2002). Servant leadership is based upon a set of assumptions that certain barriers to success can be

removed or managed out of the way, yet in educational institutions, such is not always the reality (Hughes, 2002).

However, Greenleaf's (1977) writings were not based upon research, but on a keen and intuitive sense of people and their personal relationships with institutions and with one another. Because there has been a lack of a research base, servant leadership has not been translated respectively into the world of academia. However, it has had tremendously popular appeal (Schulman, 2002). As its popularity in corporate cultures grows, it is imperative to take steps to explore its meaning and examine its effectiveness in providing leadership in the public school setting (Cooper & Looper, 2001).

John Kotter, Harvard Business School professor, noted that superintendents must be effective leaders and effective managers (as cited in Bencivenga, 2002). As all organizations move toward decentralization and democratization, the demands placed on CEOs, including district superintendents, increase. Correspondingly, the minimum levels of knowledge and skills escalate. As cited in Bencivenga, Kotter's observations illuminated the reality that superintendents are not choosing between leadership and management; rather, they are trying to establish equilibrium between these two essential roles. One role is not mutually exclusive of the other.

Organizations need a person who is clearly in charge and may not be able to be all things to all people. Servant leadership is not a match for leaders who suffers from any form of personal insecurity. They must remain confident at all times because they are at the core of the operation. Greenleaf (1991) remained steadfast to his convictions that the role of the servant leader is not to serve one's own self-interests, but the interests of the

organization and the common good. Senge (1995, 2005) noted that the concept of servant leadership means soliciting as much input as possible and helping people realize that their feelings are of value. All must come to understand that “the idea that everyone has to be in complete agreement is nonsense” (Senge, p. 230). Often times, people do not have to function in total harmonious agreement. However, people need to be in a working environment where their participation is maximized and their efforts work toward a common goal. At times, even the servant leader needs to judge the merits of a situation and analyze the critical factors (Blanchard, 1996; Hershey & Blanchard, 1977; Page & Wong, 1998).

Servant leaders need to recognize their ability to provide healing to those who have been hurt. Fullan (2001) indicated that as leaders show how much they care about individuals, it inspires individuals to follow. The servant leader focuses on the development and maintenance of the health and spirit of the organization. The complete care and well-being of those within the organization to grow and develop not only to satisfy the needs of the organization but to also grow as individuals is paramount. The servant leader embraces giving care and support while upholding the expectations of exemplary performance.

Spears (1995) stated that many leaders miss leadership opportunities because of a lack of awareness that stems from having a narrow perception of the world around them. Servant leaders use awareness to understand the challenges that an organization faces. Their awareness also provides the tools that enable them to find the solutions. Salovey and Mayer (1990) found that leaders who have an awareness of self and others respond



with more flexibility to changes in their organizations and are better able to build social networks.

Servant leaders rely on persuasion rather than coercion to influence others. They seek to convince others rather than comply. Covey (1990) stressed that real leadership power comes from an honorable character and the exercise of certain power tools. A servant leader effectively uses persuasion rather than positional authority to build consensus in making decisions within an organization. Greenleaf (1977) stated, “Leadership by persuasion has the virtue of change by convincing rather than coercion. Its advantages are obvious” (p. 30).

Conceptualization is the ability to look beyond the day-to-day realities to provide hopes, dreams, and visions for the future. Servant leaders must understand the global picture and set a course of action to obtain future goals. It is important for the leaders to truly identify the current reality and the gap between the reality and vision. Covey (1990) referred to this process as beginning with the end in mind. Servant leaders need to find a balance between this conceptual thinking and the daily operations approach. The vision shared by servant leaders expands into the areas of meaning, purpose, and self-transcendence.

Page and Wong (1998) asserted that organizations with true leadership and a clear distribution of power respect the need for everyone to be an accountable and purposeful steward of the resources. They suggested that the analogy of a championship rowing team would assist in the clear illustration of the concept in context:

At the outset, it may appear that a rowing team is just eight highly trained people going backwards as fast as they can, without communicating with each other, and

steered by someone who cannot row. During the race, it appears that the person at the back of the boat is in charge. But there is also the “stroke” that sets the pace and the standard that all the rowers must follow. When they are not racing, there is a captain of the boat who is responsible for choosing the crew, and for their discipline and motivation. But during the race, the captain is just another member of the crew. Then there is the coach, who is responsible for the training and the development of the rowers. During the practice sessions, there is no question who is in charge as he bellows out orders through the megaphone from an adjacent motor boat. The point is that there is no one person who is “the” leader. The role shifts according to the activity and stage of the team. Titles will become less important than functions in the real operational chart of the organization. The functioning of the perfect team that everyone should be striving for comes at the point when the rowers are rowing in sync and the boat seems to lift itself out of the water. That is the functioning of the perfect team that everyone should be striving for. The designated overall leader or CEO is ultimately responsible to everyone for the team’s performance in accomplishing the agreed upon tasks of the team. (pp. 9-10)

As gleaned from this rowing analogy, servant leadership seeks to break the dependency on the leader, which concomitantly serves to maximize the potential of everyone on the team. As the working environment adjusts to the needs of the organization, those it serves and those who serve, servant leadership fulfills the dream that all persons are active, vibrant contributors to the common good.

The building of a shared vision for a school does not mean that everyone has to have his or her own way; no one has to surrender their personal beliefs. However, for the organization to move forward, divergent thinking and unique visions must be harmoniously merged for the common good, which always exceeds the personal good. Spears (1995) suggested that sometimes, it is exhausting for the servant leader to be all things to all people. There appears to be a dichotomous relationship between respecting everyone’s opinions and assuring that everyone has his or her own way within the context of the organization.

The last 2 decades have produced several leadership theories, which represent a general movement toward follower-oriented models. The origin of the notion of servant leadership can be traced back to Greenleaf's (1977) initial publication, insisting that the role of a leader is that of a servant first. This model centers on leader behavior, which places the needs of followers before personal interests (Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004).

#### Perceived Weaknesses and Criticisms of Servant Leadership

Conversely, McCrimmon (2008) took strong exception to the principles of servant leadership, which appeared to be unrealistic when governing a complex organization. He suggested that even though leaders may nurture people as a means to end, they are not in a position to ensure that everyone is engaged and intrinsically motivated at all times, especially in today's complex world. He called true leaders of great success "boat rockers" who must challenge the status quo in order to maximize their impact. Recently, McCrimmon wrote:

The idea of servant leadership is therefore little more than a clever gimmick. It is not so obviously a contradiction in terms in public sector organizations where direction is more or less fixed and effectiveness is only a matter of providing excellent service at high quality and low cost. In fast moving markets where constant innovation and new directions are regularly sought, executives cannot help but make people feel uncomfortable at times. Their focus must be primarily external, not so much internal on the needs of followers. But if an organization's direction is more or less fixed, little or no leadership is necessary. It is mainly good management that is required. The reality is that a lot of what managers do is simply not leadership. It may be management, coaching, motivating, developing, but these activities do not constitute leadership. It might be acceptable to see managers as servants, but even here, if leaders must be rebels to some extent, what kind of role model for developing leaders is provided by a manager who is primarily a nourisher of others, a servant type? (p. 162)

McCrimmon (2008) explained that the notion of a servant leader is a laudable one that has an emphasis on nurturing and valuing employees. To expect leaders to be servants to their employees is unrealistic as a core concept in a world where the level of accountability rises on an almost daily basis. To be a leader, he envisioned that solid, common sense consideration and respect were far more achievable than promising a world of servant leadership nonreality. He explained:

The danger of the Servant Leadership concept is that it can prevent us from seeing that anyone at any level can be a leader. And, that to do so they have to be competitive high achievers who are determined to excel and differentiate themselves from others. Certainly one has to have some of the characteristics of servant leaders in order to get along with people, but these characteristics are by no means what leadership is totally all about. (p. 172)

In contrast, Hershey and Blanchard's (1977) theory of situational leadership presumes that certain styles of leadership are best suited in specific aspects of leadership, based upon the situation. As the situation changes, the role of the leader is to change the leadership style to adapt to the circumstances at hand. The assessment of this style exposes simplicity and flexibility, and it mirrors the manner in which leaders adapt to conditions within their own lives.

Situational leadership is practical and includes a variety of processes and strategies. It is less prescriptive and approach. The leader is allowed to first assess a situation and then to proceed without a constant focus on service to the greater good. A situational leader may or have to approach a problem from the perspective of an absolute action with little regard for the input of others (Hershey & Blanchard, 1977). It is less democratic and more autocratic when the circumstances require such action (Sergiovanni, 1992).

Situational leadership is based upon the dimensions of tasks and relationships (Hershey & Blanchard, 1977). On the other hand, Burns (1978) suggested that leadership is based upon a reciprocal process of mobilizing resources to achieve reciprocal goals and objectives. His theory of transactional leadership creates a bargain between leaders and those being led to work toward independently held goals that may have a mutually understood benefit. In the case of transactional leadership, the followers are moved to enact their roles, as agreed upon with the leader, in exchange for the intent of reward or the avoidance of punishment (McCrimmon, 2008). Although both groups may obtain their separately held goals, a common good may, or may not, be met because of this allowance for separation. In contrast, Greenleaf's servant leadership places a high price on everyone working in conjunction, without an ounce of wasted effort, toward a set of shared values and expectations (as cited in Spears, 2004).

The strategic involvement of individuals whose lives are impacted by decisions made within the organization is known as participative leadership (Drucker, 1992), one who attempts to maximize the understanding and input of followers (Glanz, 2006). Participative leadership assumes that people are more committed to the actions of the leader when they have involvement in the decision-making process. When the goals are jointly held, employees will act more cooperatively and less competitively, thus creating a form of social commitment to one another and to the decision (Davis & Useem, 2001). A participative leader is less an autocrat and more of a listener. The essential question in this style of leadership rests upon how much influence the leader will allow the followers

to have...and that varies upon the individual leader's intrinsic sense of shared governance (Stone et al., 2004).

Whereas Greenleaf left to the assumption that the leader will take into account every aspect of others' opinions, the participative leader realizes that participation has a limit (Daft, 2002; Dess & Picken, 2001). Greenleaf did not specify any boundaries in which others must remain (Herbert, 2004; McCrimmon, 2008), yet participatory leadership can "be a sham when managers ask for opinions and then go ahead and ignore them anyway" (McLagan & Nel, 1997, p. 163). This action is likely to lead to cynicism and feelings of betrayal on the part of the employees. In a servant leadership model, one attempts to take into account all of the feelings of others and avoid any form of rejection on the part of those being led, but these unrealistic goals are virtually impossible to obtain in a complex organization, or any organization that employs more than one person (Daft, 2002; Dawkins & May, 2002). A school is a perfect example of a very difficult place for servant leadership to have a genuine chance of survival (Brennan, 2007).

In the school setting, it is essential that purposeful goals exist to benefit the human beings and the nonliving organization (Hughes, 2002). Covey (1996) advocated that healthy humans grow and develop in a set of predictable yet specific ways. He postulated that leadership, based upon a unitary philosophy of principles, should be unchanging and legitimate. In fact, Covey stated that these principles are lawful in the mental realm in the same sense that the laws of the physical universe are lawful in the physical realm. People's behavior, attitudes, and values are judged according to these

principles. Covey sublimated these principles into seven essential habits of living, which he outlined in simple, catchy ways:

1. Be proactive. Between the “stimulus” of an experience and your “response” to that experience, you have freedom to choose. You can be “response-able.” And, you must take the initiative to act or you will “be acted upon.”
2. Begin with the end in mind. Be clear and careful when creating your goals. Center these goals on correct principles, which you should develop through a personal mission statement.
3. Put first things first. Manage your time and schedule your priorities. Through the exercise of your independent will, you should work to become principle-centered.
4. Think win-win. Seek mutual benefit in all interactions.
5. Seek first to understand, then to be understood. Use empathic listening and “diagnose before you prescribe.”
6. Synergize. Catalyze, unify, and unleash the greatest powers within people by respecting differences and building on strengths.
7. Sharpen the saw. Continue to renew the four dimensions of your nature: physical, social/emotional, mental, and spiritual. (p. 197)

Covey (1996) declared the “Laws of Life” to be cooperation, contribution, self-discipline, and integrity (p. 199). Relationships should build courtesy, kindness, honesty, acceptance of the others, and focus on keeping commitments. Covey suggested that problems can be solved, albeit with some struggle; all the events and things of one’s life have meaning; and all can personally exercise power to effectively shape a better world. Humans are not alienated, but intricately linked to one another in a latent synergy of community that just waits for people to participate and energize it.

#### Servant Leadership in a Modern World

Such a picture is naturally irresistible to those feeling anxious and afraid in a postmodern world, sensing the world to be fragmented, families threatened by hostility and tension, workplaces torn by competition and scarcity, lives increasingly destabilized

by urgency and stress, and a sense of competency and control undermined (McCrimmon, 2008). The real popularity of Covey's (1996) book lies in the fact that Covey has tapped a genuine problem, namely, that only the most insensitive would feel that the known world is any different from the world Covey wants to help fix. Greenleaf's (1977) seminal work on servant leadership, the work most recognized for bringing the concept of servant leadership to public domain in the mid-1970s, emphasized the servant-first imperative:

The servant-leader is servant first. In contrast to the leader first model, where service potentially becomes a tool for manipulation that is ultimately focused on serving the leader's interests over the interests of the followers, the servant-first model begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. (p. 27)

As with Greenleaf, critics of Covey, primarily postmodern writers, are suspicious of anyone or anything presuming to present a one-best theory, a single, universally applicable narrative to explain experience (Farnsworth, et al., 1993). There leaves little room for doubt, according to Spears (1995, 1998, 2004), that the essential trait of character is central to the success of servant leadership. The 10 principles of servant leadership provided by Spears (1996) served as a starting point for leadership seeking to develop as practitioners of servant leadership.

However, Laub (1999) asserted that a second core conceptualization of servant leadership exists, stating that the essence of servant leadership is better captured by the definition that "servant leadership is an understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader" (p. 81). The emphasis on leadership serving the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader is a distinctive



focus of servant leadership (Laub, 1999). Then, out of this natural and authentic service, Greenleaf argued that the servant first is brought to an aspiration to lead by means of conscious choice (as cited in Herbert, 2004).

Block (1996) defined servant leadership as a set of principles and practice that have the potential to make dramatic changes in traditionally governed organizations. He also focused on the aspect of trusting enough to be trusted as a central theme of this style of leadership. Spears (1998) elaborated upon the notion of stewardship:

Robert Greenleaf's view of all institutions was one in which CEO's, staffs, and trustees all played significant roles in holding their institutions in trust for the greater good of society. Servant leadership, like stewardship, assumes first and foremost a commitment to serving the needs of others. It also emphasizes the use of openness and persuasion, rather than control. (p. 5)

Ideally, the outcome of servant leadership is the production of additional servants. It has gradually become evident that the associated characteristics, attributes, practices, and outcomes of this leadership behavior have several ramifications for organizations, leaders, and followers (Ferrandino, 2002). The pinnacle of achievement for the true servant leader superintendent is the natural creation of a total subset of servant leaders who have the ability to assist the organization in its core mission (Herbert, 2004).

The concept of personal empowerment is at the core of many leadership models. As a functional characteristic of servant leadership, the notion of empowerment within the confines of the school setting involves the building of community within the workplace. "Servant leadership cannot prevail, unless there is a functional change in organizational attitudes and behaviors" (Page & Wong, 1998, p. 5). In this role, Page and Wong referred to the leader as the "soft glue" that maintains a working relationship in

and among the key facets of school and community. However, this emphasis on personal empowerment does not mean that servant leaders are to act in an indecisive fashion or that they must poll the entire school before a decision is made (Spears, 2003). There will be times when school leaders must make decisions regardless of the wishes of the individual or global constituencies.

In emergency situations, the best interests of the school community, that is, the sense of protecting the need for basic safety, will not permit time for consultation or debate. In these situations, the essential servant leader quickly determines where to place the greatest emphasis on finding possible solutions that will meet the needs of everyone in the organization. The actions of the servant leader will always be decided within the context of what is in the best interest of others in conjunction with the leader's personal vision (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 7).

### Summary

As Huston (2002) stated, the servant leader's primary concern lies in doing the right things for the right reasons. As stewards, servant leaders hold accountability to the greater purpose of the organization by taking their responsibilities very seriously (Page & Wong, 1998). Servant leadership places the emphasis on the leader being of primary service to other, with little regard for self (Sergiovanni, 2000).

Thus, the hallmarks of superintendents who act as servant leaders are celebrated in leaders who provide the vision and the resources to keep schools moving in a progressive direction (Greenleaf, 2002). Starret (2004) explained that servant leadership in a school setting is rooted in honoring and respecting the needs of others and

highlighting personal integrity, with a focus on the importance of social equality for all facets of school and community. In such a case, the leader is the servant, and the followers are the beneficiaries of something special in the workplace (Sergiovanni, 1992).

Servant leadership is a notion that is gaining in popularity and effectiveness in the educational realm. The servant leader places service to others and serving the needs of the global milieu of an organization as the pinnacle of leadership accomplishment (Greenleaf, 1996). An overarching goal of this study was to establish a significant correlation between the attitudes and attributes of a servant leader superintendent and the success of a total school program. Sergiovanni (1992) stated directly that the type of schools that exist directly reflect of the type of leadership climate maintained in those very same schools.

Servant leadership is a practical philosophy that supports people who choose to serve first and then lead as a way of expanding service to individuals and institutions. Servant leaders may, or may not, hold formal leadership positions. Servant leadership encourages collaboration, trust, foresight, listening, and the ethical use of power and empowerment. It encourages leaders to serve others while staying focused on achieving results in line with the organization's values and integrity.

Traditional forms of leadership within the school setting tended to focus on the management of the total school environment (Senge, 2005). Conversely, the role of the servant leader is to serve the needs of others as a primary motivation for facilitating change within a complex culture (Greenleaf, 1991). Sergiovanni (2005) suggested that a

school leader become a servant leader. The servant leadership model strives to break the dependency on the school leader to make all school-based decisions and drive all learning initiatives (Greenleaf, 1996). The role of the superintendent is to increase the staff's leadership capacity and motivate excellence through calculate risk taking from within the school.

The school leader does not improve student achievement alone or in a vacuum. The leader must delegate and share authority by empowering other members of the community so that they, too, may become leaders of global influence (Epps, 2002). The strength of the evidence correlating a servant leader superintendent to the health of a school culture is unmistakable. However, further research is required to link the role of the servant leader superintendent to the total embodiment of student achievement directly. Correlations can be made, and conclusions can be reached, but further investigation is needed to yield a higher level of clarity in this symbiotic relationship of service leadership to achievement.

A school exists for its students. It is an apt reflection of the passionate, compassionate, and leading-edge personnel and students who are a direct reflection of the values instilled in them (Brennan, 2007). Thus, is it the moral, legal, and ethical responsibility of the educational leader to ensure learning opportunities for all students, namely, a comprehensive program of instruction that provides an education adapted to the times, the capacity, and the condition of each child (Prolmann, 2002). Around the pitfalls of today's school lie numerous opportunities for student success. Greenleaf (1980), who initially inspired servant leadership, stated:

Individual teachers will be the ones to inspire youth. They will catch the vision and transmit it to students. First, they will build hope. Young people will be helped to accept the world, and to believe that they can learn to live productively in it as it is – striving, violent, unjust, as well as beautiful, caring, and supportive. They will be helped to believe they can cope, and that if they work at it over a lifetime, they may leave a little corner of the world a bit better than they found it. Then, these teachers will nourish the embryo spark of servant in as many as possible and help prepare those are able – *to lead!* (p. 32)

If servant leadership is an exceptional form of leadership, then one should be able to observe characteristics and behaviors of such leaders with an ease of identification and distinction (Russell, 2001). Many of the aforementioned researchers postulated that servant leadership should have functional attributes that empirically determine its presence within the leadership milieu of the organization. Although all attributes are important, this study focused on servant leadership from the lens of the five attributes determined by Kouzes and Posner (2003): modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, encouraging the heart, and enabling others to act. These functional attributes must be present in the approach of the superintendent to classify them as servants and as leaders (Milligan, 2003; Russell, 2001; Taylor, 2002). This distinction is a prerequisite to the superintendent as a servant leader (Spears, 2004).

Chapter 3 presents the methodological design employed in this study. It provides a review of the purpose, research questions, and hypotheses of the study. The research setting and participants are methodically clarified in this section, as well as the process utilized to engage them into this study. In addition, the rationale for selecting a quantitative design is explained, including the procedures employed to collect and analyze the data. The chapter concludes with a description of the statistical analyses

utilized to answer the research questions, and it provides formative and summative analyses of each question.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHOD

*“We must be silent before we can listen. We must listen before we can learn. We must learn before we can prepare. We must prepare before we can serve. We must serve before we can lead.”* (Ward, 1999, p. 11)

### Introduction

Existing literature asserts the notion that the values of servant leaders are different from those of nonservant leaders. This study analyzed this premise by implementing and incorporating the SASL (Taylor, 2002) and the LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2003) as primary instruments to investigate the hypotheses. The SASL professes to accurately assess and measure a leader’s traits and style against a core set of essential principles of servant leadership (Taylor, 2002). Therefore, the SASL served as a mechanism for the examination of the values of school leaders and subsequently classified school leaders into one of two categories: servant leaders and nonservant leaders.

Kouzes and Posner (2003) developed the LPI to assess best leadership practices by appraising the five functional attributes of modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, encouraging the heart, and enabling others to act. The study’s primary goal was to determine whether any statistically significant differences exist between the attributes of servant leaders and nonservant leaders. Specifically, based upon the leaders’ self-assessments of values, a determination was made to note whether servant leaders demonstrate overt and distinguishable characteristics.

### Research Design

As stated, the purpose of this quantitative study was to empirically examine those functional attributes and characteristics of a sample of self-described servant leader

school superintendents in New Jersey. The characteristics of leadership required to direct schools in a time of great uncertainties (McCrimmon, 2008) in the 21<sup>st</sup> century were investigated to the extent to which the 10 principles of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977) exist within public school superintendents in New Jersey. The intent of the research was to determine the essential benefits of servant leadership as a model. Thus, the foundation of this study rested upon the following three assumptions about servant leaders: (a) Superintendents can be divided into two categories, namely, servant leaders, those who practice and implement the principles, and nonservant leaders, those who do not implement or practice the principles of servant leaders; (b) servant leaders possess different personal values about leadership than nonservant leaders; and (c) the attributes of servant leaders grow out of personal values and the notion of the role of the leader in the hierarchy.

Therefore, the study design focused on equally important yet critical tasks during the research. The first task was to analyze the values of New Jersey school superintendents by administering the SASL (Taylor, 2002) to classify them as servant leaders or nonservant leaders. The second task was to determine whether those superintendents classified as servant leaders exhibited significant effective leadership practices in the five attributes of modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, encouraging the heart, and enabling others to act, as determined by the LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). The design of this study was approached in two equally important yet distinct phases of implementation. In the first phase, the overarching



objective was to identify and differentiate servant leaders and nonservant leaders from the total sample.

### Research Paradigm

The researcher was guided by a pragmatic paradigm that asserted, “Knowledge claims arise out of actions, situations and consequences rather than antecedent conditions” (Creswell, 2003, p. 11). The study followed a quantitative, descriptive design to test several hypotheses and determine the purpose and connectivity of the data (Creswell, 2003). This study sought answers to the questions regarding the leadership styles of a sample of New Jersey public school superintendents. Researchers who employ the pragmatic paradigm will use any approach necessary because of the concern for finding solutions to the problem (Creswell, 2003).

### Theoretical Base

The theoretical basis for this study was Greenleaf’s (1977) servant leadership model, defined as an innovative vision in which leaders perform their duties in accordance with a belief system based on services to others as the primary focus (Greenleaf, 2002). The modern leader’s goals and objectives are to promote a service-first mentality and go far beyond any traditional form of hierarchal, authoritative management style (Greenleaf, 1977, 1991). This study did not seek to compare leadership and management; rather, it focused on the value of the implementation of a servant leadership philosophy versus a leadership approach that places the leader at the center of the organization. Servant leadership places the organization at the center of leadership and decision-making principles (Frick, 2004).

Spears (2003) distilled Greenleaf's (1977, 2002) servant leadership into 10 principles: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. These principles are not simply traits or skills possessed by the leader. Rather, servant leaders are unique in their intrinsic level of motivation to unleash the potential of the organization to its fullest as the whole organization level and the individual level of its participants (Farnsworth & Blender, 1993; Spears, 2004).

Servant leadership is an ethical perspective on leadership that identifies key moral behaviors that leaders must continuously demonstrate in order to make progress on Greenleaf's best test, which provides the ethical ends for specific leadership behaviors and actions. This, coupled with Spears's (2003) synopsis of the 10 overarching traits, created a influential framework for a review of the literature that strongly supported the conceptual framework for servant leadership as a potential promise of achieving incredible results through people (Spears, 1994).

#### Purpose

The purpose of this quantitative study was to empirically examine those functional attributes and characteristics of self-described servant leader school superintendents in New Jersey. The functional attributes of leadership were investigated to the extent to which a sample of public school superintendents in New Jersey exhibit the 10 principles of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977). The second phase determined the connection of the servant leader to the critical five functional attributes of the LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2003) that impact the operation of an organization.

## Research Questions

The intent of the study was to determine the essential benefits of servant leadership as a model. Kouzes and Posner (2002) identified five elements that represent the best practices in a leadership experience: modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, encouraging the heart, and enabling others to act. The 10 functional characteristics of servant leadership identified by Spears (2004) were entirely consistent with the principles of servant leadership found in this study (Milligan, 2003).

The researcher utilized the SASL (Taylor, 2002) to determine the existence of servant leadership among public school superintendents in New Jersey. Subsequently, the subset of servant leader superintendents were assessed to determine how they perceived their own leadership effectiveness based on the five best practices in leadership in the LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). The following research questions assessed the leadership practices of identified servant leader superintendents in New Jersey:

1. Does the practice of servant leadership by public school superintendents in New Jersey (SASL) impact their perceived effectiveness in the area of modeling the way (LPI)?
2. Does the practice of servant leadership by public school superintendents in New Jersey (SASL) impact their perceived effectiveness in the area of inspiring a shared vision (LPI)?
3. Does the practice of servant leadership by public school superintendents in New Jersey (SASL) impact their perceived effectiveness in the area of challenging the process (LPI)?

4. Does the practice of servant leadership by public school superintendents in New Jersey (SASL) impact their perceived effectiveness in the area of encouraging the heart (LPI)?
5. Does the practice of servant leadership by public school superintendents in New Jersey (SASL) impact their perceived effectiveness in the area of enabling others to act (LPI)?

In these research questions, the independent variable was the leadership style of the superintendent, and the dependent variable was the functional attribute of best practice as determined by the LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2003).

#### Hypotheses

Given the existing literature regarding servant leadership and the tasks outlined for this study, this research will address five hypotheses, all of which essentially address the same essential research question: Do servant leaders differ from nonservant leaders along the five functional attributes of modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, encouraging the heart, and enabling others to act. The five null hypotheses were as follows:

*H1<sub>0</sub>*: No statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant leadership when compared to public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of modeling the way.

*H2<sub>0</sub>*: No statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant leadership when compared to public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of inspiring a shared vision.

*H3<sub>0</sub>*: No statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant leadership when compared to public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of challenging the process.

*H4<sub>0</sub>*: No statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant leadership when compared to public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of enabling others to act.

*H5<sub>0</sub>*: No statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant leadership when compared to public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of encouraging the heart

Five alternate research hypotheses were explored:

- H1<sub>A</sub>*: A statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant leadership when compared to public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of modeling the way.
- H2<sub>A</sub>*: A statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant leadership when compared to public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of inspiring a shared vision.
- H3<sub>A</sub>*: A statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant leadership when compared to public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of challenging the process.
- H4<sub>A</sub>*: A statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant leadership when compared to public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of enabling others to act.
- H5<sub>A</sub>*: A statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant

leadership when compared to public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of encouraging the heart.

In these hypotheses, the independent variable was the leadership style of the superintendent, the determination of whether the superintendent self-assessed as a servant leader. The dependent variable was functional attributes of best practices as determined by the LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2003).

#### Population and Sampling

A critical step in any study is the identification of the population for study (Creswell, 2003). The NJDOE (2008) reported that 586 superintendents were serving the 608 operational school districts in the state for the 2007-2008 school year. At the completion of the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) process, the researcher distributed 390 surveys, with the hope of receiving more than the average one third return rate.

Creswell (2003) recommended a random sample in which each person has an equal probability of being selected for participation in the study. He also asserted that random participants are best chosen with the generation of random numbers. Thus, each superintendent was listed in a table with a random number from 1 to 586 and selected in the aforementioned fashion. Given a population of 586, a random sample of 100 gave the researcher a confidence interval of +/- 8.93.

## The SASL

Page and Wong (1998) created the Self-Assessment of Servant Leadership Profile (SASLP) after an extensive research-based review of available literature on servant leadership. At the conclusion of their research, they asserted that their SASLP could be developed to accurately measure a leader's traits and style against a core set of essential principles of servant leadership (Taylor, 2002). A total of 200 descriptors of servant leadership based upon their extensive reading and research were generated. They believed that the SASLP would serve the following functions:

1. To provide a comprehensive operational definition of the servant leadership construct.
2. To provide a sense of conceptual clarity and order to the servant leadership literature currently available.
3. To provide a useful index of where one stands with regard to the development of servant leadership.
4. To serve as a training tool in teaching servant leadership.
5. To facilitate accountability of servant leaders.
6. To stimulate scientific research on the impact of servant leadership on various aspects of organizational behavior and institutional health.
7. To provide useful information on leadership characteristics and behavior.
8. To facilitate accountability of individual and institutional leadership. (p. 9)

In order to reduce redundant and ineffective questions, Page and Wong (1998) completed a detailed comparison of each item, seeking to hone in on the indicators that most reflected the core beliefs of Greenleaf and the 10 principles established by Spears. The outcome was a 100-item survey that could be administered to leaders in various professional settings that was specific enough to reflect the principles of servant leadership. It remains general enough to be applicable to many organizations (Milligan, 2002).



According to Taylor (2002), no other instrument was available to measure servant leadership prior to 1998. Although the SASLP (Page & Wong, 1998) identified servant leaders, it became very long and cumbersome to analyze (Milligan, 2003; Taylor, 2002). In 2002, Taylor modified the 100-item SASLP to consist of 24 items that represented each of the 10 categories of servant leader characteristics. The result was the SASL, a condensed, equally accurate assessment instrument. A comparative analysis of the original 100-item SASLP with the modified 24-item SASL revealed a positive correlation, with the total score of both tests at .95. The alpha reliability score of .96 resulted for the original 100-item instrument and .92 for the modified 24-item instrument (Keena, 2006; Taylor, 2002).

#### *Reliability of the SASL*

“Reliability refers to the extent to which an instrument contains ‘measurement errors’ that causes the scores/outcome to differ for reasons that are unrelated to the individual respondent” (Kouzes & Posner, 2000, p. 56). The SASL returned extremely high positive correlations between individual items and total scores. Taylor (2002) conducted individual tests on the assessment tool and concluded an alpha reliability score of .92 for his 24-item SASL, as compared to a .96 alpha score for the original 100-item SASLP. Three studies run after the completion of Taylor’s returned extremely high correlations between the individual item analysis and the total scores in the SASL, further enhancing their reliability factor.

### *Validity of the SASL*

“Validity addresses the question of whether or not an instrument truly measures what it purports to measure and accordingly, whether its scores have meaning or utility for a respondent” (Kouzes & Posner, 2000, p. 13). The subject of validity refers directly to the value that the measurement tool appears to have as an instrument. It was discovered that each usage as an integral part of a study further validated its direct connection to the principles of servant leadership (Keena, 2006; Milligan, 2003). Page and Wong, developers of the original SASLP (1998) reviewed the SASL and further studies in which it was implemented as an instrument of assessment. Further validation came from other studies, in conjunction with the fact that Taylor (2002) found no statistically significant difference between the original instrument and his 24-item SASL.

### The LPI

The second phase of the research was to assess the leadership practices of the superintendents who self-identified as servant leaders by attaining a score of 150 or better on the SASL (Taylor, 2002). Using the LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2003), the researcher assessed five of the functional attributes of servant leaders: modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, encouraging the heart, and enabling others to act. The LPI focused on the effectiveness of the superintendents’ leadership practices. The LPI, a 30-item quantitative survey instrument, was developed to determine best leadership practices. This assessment tool utilizes a 10-point, Likert-type scale to measure the frequency of the implementation of best leadership practices. The scale ranges from (1) *almost never* to (10) *almost always*.

The LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2003) has much promise in the measurement of the five functional attributes of servant leadership. Marcic (1997) stated, “It is a model of sound research design from its initial development and refinement, through subsequent, current validity studies” (p. 557). For the 8 to 10 minutes that it takes to complete, one can glean tremendous insight into the five functional attributes in accordance with Greenleaf’s servant leadership model. The LPI is easy to understand, is sensible, and is directly correlated to the functional attributes of servant leadership (Marcic; Milligan, 2003).

#### *Reliability of the LPI*

The common use of the LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2003) in leadership studies illustrates the level of best practice of servant leaders’ leadership strategies (Keena, 2006; Milligan, 2003; Taylor, 2002). Internal levels of reliability for the LPI are consistently accurate and well above the .60 alpha score threshold for reliability (Kouzes & Posner, 2000, 2003; Milligan, 2003). In addition to the aforementioned, all five of the functional attributes/leadership practices “have internal reliability scores that are above .80 for the self-assessment version” (Taylor, 2002, p. 86). The five scales are generally independent, not measuring the same phenomenon. The scales measure five the functional attributes of servant leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2000; Taylor, 2002).

Table 2 details the most current compilation of Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for the LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2003):

Table 2

*Alpha Coefficients for the LPI Observer Category*

<i>Servant leadership practice</i>	<i>Alpha coefficient</i>
1. Modeling the way	.88
2. Inspiring a shared vision	.92
3. Challenging the process	.89
4. Enabling others to act	.88
5. Encouraging the heart	.92

*Validity of the LPI*

Kouzes and Posner (2000), creators of the LPI, stated, “Items on the LPI are related to the statements that workshop participants generally make about their own or others’ personal-best leadership experiences” (p. 14). Because factor analysis often is used to determine validity, several analyses of the five factors in the LPI continue to have strong reliability ratings. According to Milligan (2003), in each case, the factor structure is essentially similar to the one involving the entire sample. Kouzes and Posner maintained a database of more than 300,000 LPI surveys that had been administered. They continue to keep the LPI under close watch and careful assessment.

Kouzes and Posner (2000, 2002, 2003) asserted that there are high levels of face validity and predictive validity in the LPI regarding measurement of the five functional attributes of servant leadership. Milligan (2003) and Taylor (2002) noted that the results of the LPI make great sense to those studying servant leadership and the specific behaviors that leaders exhibit.

## Data Collection Procedures

The researcher received approval from Walden University’s IRB to conduct the study (IRB approval #12-19-08-0329388). In Phase 1 of the study, the researcher

randomly solicited the participation of 390 New Jersey public school superintendents. They were sent a letter of introduction, the SASL (Taylor, 2002; see Appendix Q) with detailed instructions, and the self-assessment LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2003; see Appendix B). The researcher requested that they return the completed study via mail, facsimile, or scanned electronic mail. Superintendents in New Jersey have a new Intranet whereby they can e-mail questions, comments, or concerns to one another or to entire groups with the press of one button. Thus, the researcher planned to generate electronic mail instructions, explanations, and reminders. All returned surveys were coded as per NJDOE (2008) county and school district codes. No names were used in the study.

These results were analyzed in order to divide the sample into two groups. The first group represented the superintendents whose SASL scores indicated that they practice servant leadership in accordance with the functional qualities of modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, encouraging the heart, and enabling others to act (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears 1998). The second group comprised the superintendents whose SASL scores indicated that they do not practice servant leadership in accordance with the aforementioned functional qualities. They appear to lead from a model(s) other than Greenleaf's (1977) servant leadership model.

The purpose of Phase 2 was to administer the LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2003) to measure and record the extent to which the servant leaders engage in specific leadership behaviors. This phase called for the superintendent to analyze their actions in terms of the manner in which they responded to situations in the moment, as opposed to how they thought they should have responded, given the opportunity for time for reflection

(Kouzes & Posner, 2000). The data were analyzed in accordance with the publisher's directions to connect the leaders' responses with the five functional attributes that are the hallmark of the LPI: modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, encouraging the heart, and enabling others to act.

#### Data Analysis Plan

The quantitative data obtained from the SASL (Taylor, 2002) were entered into an SPSS computer information system for statistical analysis. The categorical data were obtained by determining the frequency of occurrence in the categories. The data were analyzed by examining a comparison of the total SASL score on the 12 categories of behaviors that comprise the 10 principles of servant leadership: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of the people, and building community. Specifically, the data analysis was divided into two phases.

##### *Phase 1*

The data obtained from the SASL (Taylor, 2002) were analyzed by obtaining a total SASL score on the 12 categories of behaviors that comprise the 10 principles of servant leadership. A continuum scale was generated, ranging from those superintendents who predominantly implement the characteristics of servant leadership to those superintendents who do not implement the characteristics of servant leadership. The independent variables consisted of the demographic data from the survey (age, gender, experience, etc.), and the dependent variable was the overall score obtained from the SASL. A frequency distribution chart was created to ascertain the quantity of servant

leaders and nonservant leaders. A chi-square test was implemented in conjunction with the demographic data as a set of dependent variable for future study.

### *Phase 2*

The data obtained from the LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2003) were analyzed using descriptive statistics and ANOVA. The independent variables were the superintendents who implemented the principles of servant leadership and those superintendents who did not. The dependent variables consisted of the five functional attributes of servant leadership in the LPI: modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, encouraging the heart, and enabling others to act.

### Ethical Issues

The researcher took every measure to ensure the protection of the personal and professional rights of the superintendents who choose to participate in this study. The value of self-assessment is critical and allows for true reflection on the part of the leader. At no time in this study of servant leadership were any subordinates of the superintendents asked to cast judgment upon their supervisors' style of leadership, thus removing the potential for a threat to the validity of the results. The superintendents are under constant scrutiny from all facets of the school and the community, so their protection was a priority for this researcher.

### Threats to Validity

One of the most significant limitations noted in this study was the lack of a universally agreed upon definition of leadership. Because a survey permits only a superficial gauge of one person's experiences, the results of this study may not be

generalized to all facets of educational leadership. As with any study, the findings may be subject to a myriad of interpretations. Thus, the researcher assumed that all responses to any and all survey questions or interview prompts were answered truthfully and to the very best of the participants' knowledge. The researcher also assumed that all of the respondents were school leaders who were familiar with current trends and issues in education. The assumption also was made that all of the school leaders would morally and ethically act in accordance with their local board of education goals, state mandates, and federal law (Kennedy, 2002). A final assumption was that all of the respondents participated of their own free will and that they had no reason to be concerned that their responses would be held in anything less than the highest level of confidentiality by the researcher.

### Feasibility

This study possessed a high degree of attainability and had a significant likelihood of achieved success. The study was limited to the population of 586 practicing public school superintendents in New Jersey who report directly to their local boards of education. All the sampling was simple random in nature, so the population was not limited to one area of geographic region of this Northeastern state. Because New Jersey is known for its cultural and economic diversity, this study was representative of different socioeconomic and cultural cohorts.

To be invited to participate, a person had to be a currently practicing, licensed superintendent in New Jersey. This study did not include those serving in positions in an interim capacity. To assure safeguards, a list of superintendents was obtained from the



NJDOE (2008) via the county offices of education. Every effort was made to conduct an objective and bias-free study. The researcher may have known some participants in a personal or professional capacity, but this fact had no impact on the findings or results.

### Summary

The primary purpose of this study was to obtain reliable, informative data to assess the practice of servant leadership among a sample of public school superintendents in New Jersey. This study focused on the role of the superintendent as the CEO of the school district. The measure of personal motives and functional attributes of leaders was designed to highlight the practices of servant leadership, the seminal work of Greenleaf (1977).

This study sought to examine the leadership styles of New Jersey superintendents with the intention of exploring the superintendents' self-perceptions through the lens of the servant leadership model (Greenleaf, 1977). As determined by the SASL (Taylor, 2002), the superintendents were placed on a continuum from dedicated practitioners of servant leadership to those who do not implement the principles of servant leadership. Those determining assessment outcomes were compared to the assessment data from Kouzes and Posner's (2003) LPI to measure servant-leader effectiveness in conjunction with the five functional attributes of servant leadership: modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, encouraging the heart, and enabling others to act.

These findings are important to the educational community, the New Jersey School Boards Association, as well as to the theory of leadership. In addition, New Jersey's astronomical superintendent turnover rate has several districts developing

leadership profiles of potential candidates prior to soliciting applicants (Brennan, 2007). Thus, this study may be of value to boards of education seeking to employ people who manifest a specific style of leadership. As further examination of the link between values and the functional attributes of servant leadership are developed, this study may help to expand the notion that servant first is at the fulcrum of all that is good in education, a place where good leadership is so necessary to meet the needs of the students served.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

*Servant leadership is the desire to see all of those you work with become all that they can be...and more! (Greenleaf, 1977).*

### Introduction

Greenleaf (2001), the architect of servant leadership, alleged that the best leadership resulted from the innate desire to serve others. Servant leaders approach others from the perspective of wanting to serve rather than be served. Because of the increasing attention that servant leadership is attracting, coupled with the lack of quantifiable research that has been conducted on it, the central focus of this study was to examine the existence of servant leadership at the superintendent level of school administration in the public schools in New Jersey.

Although effective leadership styles have been researched, some educational leaders still rely upon outdated, disconnected managerial practices that place management over leadership (Sergiovanni, 1992). Management simply seeks to protect the status quo and provide the guidelines for a school's operation (Hughes, 2002). Leadership requires a clear and compelling way to help schools achieve extraordinary results with people, through people. The leader facet of the servant leader lies within the leader's disposition to take risks, show the way, and provide conscious choices for people to exceed their own limits at every turn (Sergiovanni, 2005).

The researcher sought to address the problem in education by comparing the leadership practices of a sample of public school superintendents to the five determined best practices: modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, encouraging the heart, and enabling others to act. This investigation of the effectiveness

of servant leadership in a school setting seeks to provide statistical research to transform interest in a belief system into a valid assessment of leadership.

### Research Questions

Data from the sample population was collected to seek answers to the following five research questions:

1. Does the practice of servant leadership by public school superintendents in New Jersey (SASL) impact their perceived effectiveness in the area of modeling the way (LPI)?
2. Does the practice of servant leadership by public school superintendents in New Jersey (SASL) impact their perceived effectiveness in the area of inspiring a shared vision (LPI)?
3. Does the practice of servant leadership by public school superintendents in New Jersey (SASL) impact their perceived effectiveness in the area of challenging the process (LPI)?
4. Does the practice of servant leadership by public school superintendents in New Jersey (SASL) impact their perceived effectiveness in the area of encouraging the heart (LPI)?
5. Does the practice of servant leadership by public school superintendents in New Jersey (SASL) impact their perceived effectiveness in the area of enabling others to act (LPI)?

Multiple methods of data collection were used in this study to identify servant leaders and then to assess the presence of the five functional attributes of best practices

leadership: modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, encouraging the heart, and enabling others to act. As mentioned previously, 390 of a population of 586 superintendents were sent a letter of introduction, the SASL (Taylor, 2002) with detailed instructions, and the self-assessment LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2003) to investigate the presence of the five functional attributes of leadership.

### Data Analysis

In Phase 1 of the study, the SASL (Taylor, 2002) was used to study a representative sample of 390 of the 586 currently employed school superintendents in New Jersey. Using a 7-point Likert scale, the respondents determined how frequently they employed the components of a particular leadership practice. The scale included (1) *strongly disagree*, (2) *disagree*, (3) *slightly disagree*, (4) *undecided*, (5) *slightly agree*, (6) *agree*, and (7) *strongly agree*.

The researcher distributed 390 SASL and LPI surveys to a random sample of practicing New Jersey superintendents. As each data set was returned, the researcher reviewed it for completeness and adherence to the directions provided with the instruments. Of the sum total of 158 SASLs and LPIs that were returned, 156 were usable, and 2 were unusable: 1 was incomplete, and 1 respondent did not follow the directions, apparently reversing the scales on the instruments. Thus, a response rate of 40.5% (158 of 390) was reported, with a usability rate of 98.8% (156 of 158 usable). After the instruments were counted, the researcher extrapolated only the responses and transferred them to Microsoft Excel, where they were automatically totaled in column form. The totals then were entered into SPSS raw data screen for statistical analysis.

Because the SASL is a 23-item assessment with a 7-point Likert scale, the range of possible scores is from a low of 24 to a high of 168. The raw scores for the 156 New Jersey superintendents who appropriately completed the SASL ranged from 89 to 167. Table 3 provides a visual assessment of the raw SASL scores with descriptive statistics and measures of central tendency:

Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics from the SASL*

	<i>N</i>	Range	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>SD</i>
SASL Total Score	156	78	89	167	146.06	149.5	14.745

Note. The raw data are only from the SASL and are reported as composite scores.

In accordance with the administration and procedures of the SASL results, the scores were placed on a continuum from the lowest to the highest to determine a median split (Milligan, 2003; Taylor, 2002). In this study, the median was identified as a score of 150. The median split was used to identify servant leaders; those who scored below 150 were classified as nonservant leaders, and those who scored at or above 150 were placed in the servant leader group (Taylor, 2002). The superintendents who rated themselves a 149 or lower were identified as nonservant leaders, whereas the superintendents who rated themselves a 150 or higher were identified as servant leaders. The nonservant leader scores ranged from 89 to 149, and the servant leader scores ranged from 150 to 167. The median split divided the 156 superintendents into two groups, namely, 79 servant leaders and 77 nonservant leaders. The researcher analyzed the LPIs of the 79 servant leaders only. The LPIs completed by the 77 nonservant leaders were not assessed. Figure 1 represents a graphic illustration of the SASL score distributions for the study.

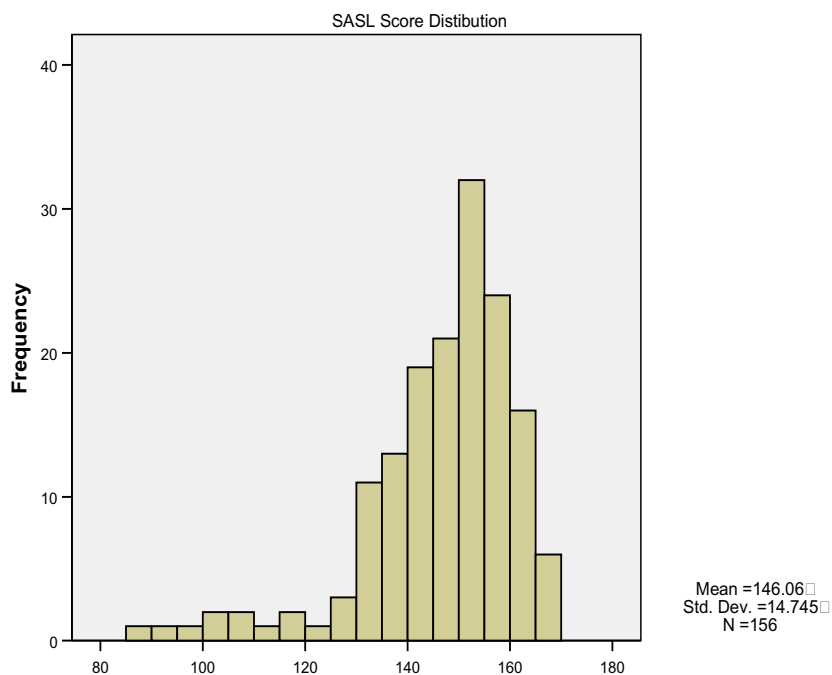


Figure 1. SASL score distributions.

#### Data Analysis: The SASL and Demographics

During Phase 1 of the study, basic demographic data were obtained from each participant. A multivariate test was conducted to determine whether the demographic variables were statistically significant to the overall self-assessment rating. Thus, all of the SASL (Taylor, 2002) surveys, both servant leader and nonservant leader, were analyzed through Pearson's chi-square test to determine whether the demographic variables (gender, total educational work experience, total administrative work experience, level of education, and ethnicity) were significantly related to the overall self-assessment rating. Chi-square is the most popular of the nonparametric tests and works on the straightforward assumption that research often is unpredictable. In this case, it allowed the researcher to determine whether categorical samples within a population fall

into categories in proportions equal to (or not) what one would expect simply by chance. The chi-square assessment aided in the final analysis of determining whether an event or an outcome was statistically significant (Urdan, 2005).

Of the 156 superintendents who successfully completed the SASL (Taylor, 2002), 66 (42.3%) were females, and 90 (57.7%) were males. The number of female superintendents identified as servant leaders was 35 (53.1%), and the number identified as nonservant leaders was 31 (46.9%). The number of male superintendents identified as servant leaders was 44 (48.9%), and the number identified as nonservant leaders was 46 (51.1%). Table 4 presents a visual summary of the data from SASL response data.

Table 4

*SASL Information for Gender Results*

Gender	Servant leaders		Nonservant leaders		Total	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Female	35	53.1	31	46.9	66	42.3
Male	44	48.9	46	51.1	90	57.7
Totals	79		77		156	

A chi-square test of independence analysis revealed no significant difference in gender between servant leaders and nonservant leaders at the ( $X^2(1, N=156) = .261$ ,  $p = .609$ ) at the .05 level of significance. Table 5 presents an analysis of the findings.



Table 5

*Chi-Square Analysis of Servant Leadership: Gender*

Chi-square tests					
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson chi-square	.261 <sup>b</sup>	1	.609		
Continuity correction <sup>a</sup>	.122	1	.727		
Likelihood ratio	.261	1	.609		
Fisher's exact test				.630	.364
Linear-by-linear association	.260	1	.610		
N of valid cases	156				

YorN *GENDER crosstabulation				
Count	1.00	2.00	Total	
YorN	.00	31	46	77
	1.00	35	44	79
Total		66	90	156

The educational experience of the New Jersey superintendents who completed the SASL (Taylor, 2002) included 3 (1.9%) leaders with less than 5 years of experience in education. Of these, 1 (33.3%) was identified as a servant leader, and 2 (66.7%) were identified as nonservant leaders. A total of 47 (30.1%) superintendents had between 10 and 19 years of time in education; in this cohort, 19 (40.4%) were identified as servant leaders, and 28 (59.6%) were identified as nonservant leaders. Surveyed superintendents with 20 to 29 years of service to the profession numbered 37. In this category, 23 (62.2%) were identified as servant leaders, and 14 (37.8%) as nonservant leaders. Finally, those with 30 or more years in the field of education numbered 69 (44.2%), by far the largest cohort of professionals. Within this cadre of educators, 36 (52.2%) were identified as servant leaders, and 33 (47.8%) as nonservant leaders. Table 6 presents a summary of the data from SASL response data.

Table 6

*SASL Information for Education Experience Results*

Education experience	Servant leaders		Nonservant leaders		Total	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Less than 10 years	1	33.3	2	66.7	3	1.9
10-19 years	19	40.4	28	59.6	47	30.1
20-29 years	23	62.2	14	37.8	37	23.7
30 or more years	36	52.2	33	47.8	69	44.2
Totals	79		77		156	

A chi-square test of independence analysis revealed no significant difference in professional education experience between servant leaders and nonservant leaders ( $X^2 (1, N=156) = 4.351, p = .226$ ) at the .05 level of significance. Table 7 presents an analysis of the findings.

Table 7

*Chi-Square Analysis of Servant Leadership: Education Experience*

		YorN *EDUEXP crosstabulation					
		EDUEXP					
		1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	Total	
YorN	.00	Count	33	14	28	2	77
		Expected count	34.1	18.3	23.2	1.5	77.0
		Std. residual	-.2	-1.0	1.0	.4	
	1.00	Count	36	23	19	1	79
		Expected count	34.9	18.7	23.8	1.5	79.0
		Std. residual	.2	1.0	-1.0	-.4	
Total		Count	69	37	47	3	156
		Expected count	69.0	37.0	47.0	3.0	156.0

Chi-square tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig (2-sided)
Pearson chi-square	4.351 <sup>a</sup>	3	.226
Continuity correction	4.390	3	.222
Likelihood ratio	1.497	1	.221
Fisher's exact test	156		
Linear-by-linear association			
N of valid cases			

a. 2 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.48.

The administrative experience of the superintendents completing the SASL (Taylor, 2002) included 17 (10.9%) superintendents with less than 5 years of administrative experience. Of those, 5 (29.4%) were identified as servant leaders, and 12 (70.6%) were identified as a nonservant leaders. A total of 30 superintendents had between 5 and 9 years of administrative experience. There were 12 (40%) identified as servant leaders, and 18 (60%) identified as nonservant leaders. Superintendents with 10 to 14 years of administrative experience numbered 39 (25%) in total. Within this subgroup, 22 (56.4%) superintendents were identified as servant leaders, and 17 (43.6%) were classified as being nonservant leaders. A total of 70 (44.9%) superintendents, the largest cohort in this demographic category, had 15 or more years of administrative

experience. Of these leaders, 40 (57.1%) were identified as servant leaders, and 30 (42.9%) were identified as nonservant leaders. Table 8 presents a summary of the data from SASL response data.

Table 8

*SASL Information for Administrative Experience Results*

Administrative experience	Servant leaders		Nonservant leaders		Total	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Less than 5 years	5	29.4	12	70.6	17	10.9
5-9 years	12	40	18	60	30	19.2
10-14 years	22	56.4	17	43.6	39	25
15 or more years	40	57.1	30	42.9	70	44.9
Totals	79		77		156	

A chi-square test of independence analysis revealed no significant difference in administrative experience between servant leaders and nonservant leaders ( $X^2(1, N=156) = 6.127, p = .106$ ) at the .05 level of significance. Table 9 presents an analysis of the findings.

Table 9

*Chi-Square Analysis of Servant Leadership: Administrative Experience*

		YorN *ADMINEXP crosstabulation					
		ADMINEXP					
		1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	Total	
YorN	.00	Count	30	17	18	12	77
		Expected count	34.6	19.3	14.8	8.4	77.0
		Std. residual	-.8	-.5	.8	1.2	
	1.00	Count	40	22	12	5	79
		Expected count	35.4	19.8	15.2	8.6	79.0
		Std. residual	.8	.5	-.8	-1.2	
Total		Count	70	39	30	17	156
		Expected count	70.0	39.0	30.0	17.0	156.0

Chi-square tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig (2-sided)
Pearson chi-square	6.127 <sup>a</sup>	3	.106
Continuity correction	6.229	3	.101
Likelihood ratio	5.304	1	.021
Fisher's exact test	156		
Linear-by-linear association			
N of valid cases			

a. 0 cells (0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8.39.

The highest academic degree obtained by none of the superintendents was at the bachelor's level. The researcher anticipated this result, given that New Jersey requires a minimum of a master's degree for professional educators seeking certification as a superintendent (NJDOE, 2008). Of the total superintendents surveyed, 61 (39.1%) had obtained a doctorate degree. Within this category, 34 (55.7%) were servant leaders, and 27 (44.3%) were nonservant leaders. A total of 15 superintendents were education specialists, an official title defined in this state as having all of their doctoral credits for formal coursework; however, deficient the credits and final product of a doctoral study. Within this cohort of 15, 7 (46.7%) were servant leaders, and 8 (53.3%) were nonservant leaders. In the most widespread category of this demographic, 80 (51.3%)

superintendents had obtained a master's degree as their highest level of formal education. Of these superintendents, 38 (47.5%) were designated servant leaders, and 42 (52.5%) as nonservant leaders. Table 10 presents a visual summary of the data from SASL response data.

Table 10

*SASL Information for Highest Academic Degree Obtained Results*

Highest degree obtained	Servant leaders		Nonservant leaders		Total	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
BA	0	0	0	0	0	0
MA	38	47.5	42	52.5	80	51.3
Ed. specialist	7	46.7	8	53.3	15	9.6
Doctorate	34	55.7	27	44.3	61	39.1
Totals	79		77		156	

A chi-square test of independence analysis revealed no significant difference in highest academic degree obtained between servant leaders and nonservant leaders ( $\chi^2 (1, N=156) = 1.044, p = .593$ ) at the .05 level of significance. Table 11 presents an analysis of the findings.

Table 11

*Chi-Square Analysis of Servant Leadership: Degree*

		YorN *DEGREE crosstabulation				
		DEGREE				
		2.00	3.00	4.00	Total	
YorN	.00	Count	42	8	27	77
		Expected count	39.5	7.4	30.1	77.0
		Std. residual	.4	.2	-.6	
	1.00	Count	38	7	34	79
		Expected count	40.5	7.6	30.9	79.0
		Std. residual	-.4	-.2	.6	
Total		Count	80	18	61	156
		Expected count	80.0	15.0	61.0	156.0

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig (2-sided)
Pearson chi-square	1.044 <sup>a</sup>	2	.593
Likelihood ratio	1.046	2	.593
Linear-by-linear association	.906	1	.341
N of valid cases	156		

a. 0 cells (0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.40.

The last category of the demographic data was ethnicity. A total of 10 (6.4%) superintendents self-identified as Hispanic, 7 (4.5%) as African American, 129 (82.7%) as Caucasian, 5 (3.2%) as Native American or Alaskan Native, and 5 (3.2%) as Asian or Pacific Islander. No superintendents self-identified as Other. In the area of leadership, 6 (60%) Hispanic superintendents were identified as servant leaders; 4 (40%) Hispanic superintendents were identified as nonservant leaders. Of the 7 African American superintendents, 3 (42.9%) were identified as servant leaders, and 4 (57.1%) as nonservant leaders. Within the largest population of this sample, Caucasian superintendents, 67 (51.9%) were classified as servant leaders, and 62 (48.1%) as nonservant leaders. It was apparent to the researcher that Caucasians dominated this sample of New Jersey school superintendents.

Although New Jersey schools are diverse in population, this study illustrated a lack of true correlating diversity within the ranks of superintendent. Native American, Alaskan Native, and Asian/Pacific Islander superintendents comprised the same sample quantity, that is, 5 (3.2%) for each category. In the identification process, 1 (20%) Native American superintendent was determined to be a servant leader, and 4 (80%) were nonservant leaders. Dissimilarly, 2 (40%) Asian/Pacific Islanders were identified as servant leaders, and 3 (60%) as nonservant leaders. Table 12 presents a visual summary of the data from SASL response data.

Table 12

*SASL Information for Ethnicity Results*

Ethnicity	Servant leaders		Nonservant leaders		Total	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Hispanic	6	60	4	40	10	6.4
African American	3	42.9	4	57.1	7	4.5
Caucasian	67	51.9	62	48.1	129	82.7
Native American	1	20	4	80	5	3.2
Asian/Pacific Isl.	2	40	3	60	5	3.2
Totals	79		77		156	

A chi-square test of independence analysis revealed no significant difference in ethnicity between servant leaders and nonservant leaders ( $X^2 (1, N=156) = 2.711$ ,  $p = .607$ ) at the .05 level of significance. Table 13 presents an analysis of the findings.



Table 13

*Chi-Square Analysis of Servant Leadership: Ethnicity*

		YorN *ETHNICITY crosstabulation						
		ETHNICITY						
		1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	Total	
YorN	.00	Count	4	4	62	4	3	77
		Expected count	4.9	3.5	63.7	2.5	2.5	77.0
		Std. residual	-.4	.3	-.2	1.0	.3	
	1.00	Count	6	3	67	1	2	79
		Expected count	5.1	3.5	65.3	2.5	2.5	79.0
		Std. residual	.4	-.3	.2	-1.0	-.3	
Total		Count	10	7	129	5	5	156
		Expected count	10.0	7.0	129.0	5.0	5.0	156.0

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig (2-sided)
Pearson chi-square	2.711 <sup>a</sup>	4	.607
Likelihood ratio	2.843	4	.584
Linear-by-linear association	.861	1	.354
N of valid cases	156		

a. 7 cells (70%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.47.

## Data Analysis: The LPI

In Phase 2 of the study, Kouzes and Posner's (2003) LPI served to add to current research on servant leadership by assessing the leadership effectiveness of servant leaders and nonservant leaders. The LPI consists of 30 statements describing various leadership actions and behaviors. Using a 10-point Likert scale, the respondents self-assessed how frequently they utilized the components of a particular leadership practice. The scale of responses included (1) *almost never*, (2) *rarely*, (3) *seldom*, (4) *once in awhile*, (5) *occasionally*, (6) *sometimes*, (7) *fairly often*, (8) *usually*, (9) *very frequently*, and (10) *almost always*.

The 30 statements in the LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2003) are components of the five functional attributes of leadership practices. An individual's use of *modeling the way* was

determined through responses to Items 1, 6, 11, 16, 21, and 26. Inventory Items 2, 7, 12, 17, 22, and 27 focused on *inspiring a shared vision*. The behavior of *challenging the process* was measured through Items 3, 8, 13, 18, 23, and 28. *Enabling others to act* was addressed through Items 4, 9, 14, 19, 24, and 29. Finally, Questions 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, and 30 were designed to identify leadership behaviors that *encourage the heart*.

In completing the self-assessment LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2003), the superintendents were asked to rate their own leadership practices. The scores entered by the superintendents on each of the 30 statements indicated the frequency with which they engaged in certain overt or covert leadership behaviors. Because scores for each item ranged from 1 (*almost never*) to 10 (*almost always*), scores for each of the 5 functional attributes, 6 items for each attribute, had a range of a low of 6 to a high of 60. A high score indicated an attribute of strength, and a low score indicated some opportunity for improvement (Milligan, 2003). Table 14 presents the basic descriptive statistics comprised of the LPI raw scores from the total sample of the study.

Table 14

*LPI Raw Scores from Total Sample*

LPI raw scores	<i>N</i>	Range	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i>
Modeling	156	35.00	25.00	60.00	49.2115
Inspiring	156	36.00	24.00	60.00	48.9231
Challenging	156	41.00	19.00	60.00	51.6603
Enabling	156	29.00	31.00	60.00	51.7628
Encouraging	156	38.00	22.00	60.00	50.8782
Valid N (listwise)	156				

The LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2003) is a critical tool to assess leadership effectiveness because it translates the concept of leadership into statements that highlight actions and relationships. The LPI defines and quantifies specific behaviors that measure the science of leadership while also providing details about how leaders are succeeding and how they can improve (Keena, 2006). This tool specifies that a leader must assign 1 to 10 points to each of the 30 statements. Thus, each point represents the amount of value that the leader places on that specific notion of the milieu. Table 15 illustrates the total points that all leaders in the sample assigned to themselves; it also provides rankings that compare each of the five functional attributes. It is interesting to note that the order of frequency in which each of the leadership practices was self-assessed among the sample was exactly the same for servant leaders and nonservant leaders.

Table 15

*LPI Functional Attributes Data Comparison: Total Points*

	Servant leaders (79)		Nonservant leaders (77)		Superintendents (156)	
	Points	Rank	Points	Rank	Points	Rank
Modeling	4230	4 <sup>th</sup>	3435	4 <sup>th</sup>	7665	4 <sup>th</sup>
Inspiring	4223	5 <sup>th</sup>	3381	5 <sup>th</sup>	7604	5 <sup>th</sup>
Challenging	4336	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3711	2 <sup>nd</sup>	8047	1 <sup>st</sup>
Enabling	4370	1 <sup>st</sup>	3683	1 <sup>st</sup>	8053	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Encouraging	4299	3 <sup>rd</sup>	3620	3 <sup>rd</sup>	7919	3 <sup>rd</sup>

Most school superintendents firmly adhere to the principles of process (Greenfield, 2004). The ability to collaborate is increasingly important in 21<sup>st</sup>-century organizations. Kouzes and Posner (2002) argued that collaboration, not competition, works best in organizations and that interdependence fosters collaboration. They

contended that unless everyone in the organization succeeds, no one really succeeds or, at a minimum, it takes a coordinated effort to succeed.

Finally, Kouzes and Posner (2000, 2002, 2003) believed that for collaboration to work effectively, frequent face-to-face communication must take place. Exemplary leaders work diligently to facilitate a myriad of opportunities for communication to take place among team members, across disciplines, between departments, and within all levels of the organization. Tables 16 and 17 illustrate a detailed synopsis and comparison of the means from the superintendents' LPIs.

Table 16

*LPI Functional Attributes Data Comparison of the Means*

	Servant leaders		Nonservant leaders		Total sample	
	<i>M</i>	Rank	<i>M</i>	Rank	<i>M</i>	Rank
Modeling	53.54	4 <sup>th</sup>	44.61	4 <sup>th</sup>	49.21	4 <sup>th</sup>
Inspiring	53.46	5 <sup>th</sup>	43.90	5 <sup>th</sup>	48.92	5 <sup>th</sup>
Challenging	54.89	2 <sup>nd</sup>	48.19	2 <sup>nd</sup>	51.66	1 <sup>st</sup>
Enabling	55.32	1 <sup>st</sup>	47.83	1 <sup>st</sup>	51.76	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Encouraging	54.42	3 <sup>rd</sup>	47.01	3 <sup>rd</sup>	50.87	3 <sup>rd</sup>

Table 17

*LPI Functional Attributes Data Comparison of Mean Differences*

LPI: Attributes	SL <i>M</i>	NSL <i>M</i>	TS <i>M</i>	<i>MD</i>	
				SL vs. NSL	SL vs. TS
Modeling	53.54	44.61	49.21	8.93	4.33
Inspiring	53.46	43.90	48.92	9.56	4.54
Challenging	54.89	48.19	51.66	6.70	3.23
Enabling	55.32	47.83	51.76	7.49	3.56
Encouraging	54.42	47.01	50.87	7.41	3.55

*Note.* SL servant leaders; NSL nonservant leaders; TS total sample of superintendents.

Kouzes and Posner (2002) stated, "To create a climate of meaningfulness, first you [an effective leader] must personally believe in something yourself. Before you can

inspire others, you have to be inspired yourself” (p. 112). In essence, the act of leadership involves the creation of a personal vision and personal motivation. Then, a leader can strive to create a culture where individuals within an organization will work toward achieving that vision, not because they want to please someone else or because they will face sanctions or punishments if they do not, but because they have chosen to comply. An exciting vision of the future can instill a sense of meaning and purpose to individuals within an organization.

#### Findings: Analyses of the Five Research Questions

*Research Question 1: Does the practice of servant leadership by public school superintendents in New Jersey (SASL) impact their perceived effectiveness in the area of modeling the way (LPI)?*

The fourth ranked functional attribute, as determined by the LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2003), was that of modeling the way, with a mean score of 53.54 (see Table 18). Leaders set an example for others to follow in words, actions, thoughts, and other overt behaviors. Leaders set the tone; modeling involves the setting of an example by aligning actions with a sense of shared values (Spears, 2004). Modeling begins with the clarification of personal values and then allowing your core beliefs to influence the work of the institution. In the LPI, Kouzes and Posner (2003) assessed the leaders with a strong sense of serving as a role model for the organization, never asking others to do that which they would not do. Leaders chart a course of small benchmarks that relate to the achievement of larger goals and objectives.

Table 18

*Descriptive Statistics for Modeling the Way*

SLvNSL		Group statistics			
		<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SEM</i>
Modeling	1.00	79	53.5443	3.98329	.44816
	2.00	77	44.6104	7.45011	.84902

*Research Question 2:* Does the practice of servant leadership by public school superintendents in New Jersey (SASL) impact their perceived effectiveness in the area of inspiring a shared vision (LPI)?

The fifth ranked functional attribute was that of inspiring a shared vision, with a mean score of 53.46 (see Table 19). This researcher does not refer to the “fifth ranked attribute” as the least important because all of the attributes must play in harmony for the servant leader to “perform magic.” Effective leaders must work hard to clarify their personal visions before making any effort to frame a shared vision for others. Leaders who inspire a shared vision are committed to the vision. They are forward looking during times of rapid change, they imagine possibilities, they see the global perspective in what they want to accomplish, and they instill a shared sense of destiny (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

Table 19

*Descriptive Statistics for Inspiring a Shared Vision*

SLvNSL		Group statistics			
		<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SEM</i>
Inspiring	1.00	79	53.4557	3.84574	.43268
	2.00	77	43.9091	8.70297	.99180

*Research Question 3:* Does the practice of servant leadership by public school superintendents in New Jersey (SASL) impact their perceived effectiveness in the area of challenging the process (LPI)?

The findings of Milligan (2003) and Taylor (2002) concurred with this researcher's findings that challenging the process is the second most critical attribute of the servant leader superintendent, with a mean score of 54.89 (see Table 20). This facet of dynamic leadership involves the ability to promote cooperative goals and build trust within the organization. This functional attribute requires the servant leader to share trust and power in a model of democratic governance such that the superintendent is less of a director and more of a facilitator (Peterson & Kelley, 2001). Servant leaders are content to live with setbacks as long as the ultimate goals of success are achievement (Autry, 2002).

Table 20

*Descriptive Statistics for Challenging the Process*

SLvNSL	Group statistics				
		<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SEM</i>
Challenging	1.00	79	54.8861	3.35501	.37747
	2.00	77	48.1948	7.25302	.82656

*Research Question 4:* Does the practice of servant leadership by public school superintendents in the State of New Jersey (SASL) impact their perceived effectiveness in the area of enabling others to act (LPI)?

The data suggested that enabling others to act is the most critical leadership attribute, with a mean score of 55.32 from those identified as servant leaders (see Table 21). Milligan (2003) and Taylor (2002) found the exact same first priority in their research. The nature of the superintendency no longer allows for a solo act; the role has

becoming increasingly complex (Donaldson, 2006). Kouzes and Posner (2002) stated, “For leaders the message is clear: collaborate to succeed” (p. 243). They believed that effective leaders, in order to foster collaboration, must work diligently to “create a climate of trust,” be a facilitator of “positive interdependence,” and “support face to face interactions” (p. 243). A climate of trust is essential because without trust, leaders cannot lead. Individuals will not embrace the vision of a person whom they do not trust. In addition, leaders who cannot trust do one of two things, namely, they either overmanage the work of others or perform all of the work themselves.

Table 21

*Descriptive Statistics for Enabling Others to Act*

SLvNSL	Group statistics				
		<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SEM</i>
Enabling	1.00	79	55.3165	2.57973	.29024
	2.00	77	47.8312	5.81831	.66306

*Research Question 5: Does the practice of servant leadership by public school superintendents in New Jersey (SASL) impact their perceived effectiveness in the area of encouraging the heart (LPI)?*

The third-ranked functional attribute found in New Jersey school superintendent servant leaders was that of encouraging the heart, with a mean score of 54.42 (see Table 22). Leaders begin with the mindset of illustrating great personal respect for the worth, dignity, and contributions of every person. To accomplish extraordinary goals, true leaders know that their best work is done through and with people. People in servant-led organizations are made to feel like heroes as they are given the gifts of hope, courage, and confidence.



Table 22

*Descriptive Statistics for Encouraging the Heart*

SLvNSL	Group statistics				
		<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SEM</i>
Encouraging	1.00	79	54.4177	40.8753	.45988
	2.00	77	47.0130	7.97775	.90915

## Statements of the Null Hypotheses

*Null Hypothesis 1:* No statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant leadership when compared to the public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of modeling the way.

Null Hypothesis 1 was rejected for the functional attribute and leadership practice of modeling the way. The servant leader mean score was 53.54, and the nonservant leader mean score was 44.61, for a mean difference of 8.93 ( $F = 29.237$ ,  $t = 9.373$ ), which was statistically significant at the .05 level. The Cohen's  $d$  ( $d = 1.459$ ) and  $r^2$  ( $r^2 = .598$ ) measures of effect size further supported the statistical significance of these findings (see Table 23).

Table 23

*Results of Independent Samples t Test and Statistical Measures of Effect: Modeling the Way*

		Measures of the effect		t test for equality of means						
		Cohen's <i>d</i>	<i>r</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>MD</i>	<i>SED</i>	95% confidence interval of the difference	
									Lower	Upper
Modeling	Equal variances assumed	1.459	.598	9.373	154	29.237	8.93391	.95318	7.05091	10.81692
	Equal variances not assumed			9.306	115.514		8.93391	.96004	7.03235	10.83548

*Null Hypothesis 2:* No statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant leadership when compared to the public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of inspiring a shared vision

Null Hypothesis 2 was rejected for the functional attribute and leadership practice of inspiring a shared vision. The servant leader mean score was 53.46, and the nonservant leader mean score was 43.90, for a mean difference of 9.56 ( $F = 56.898$ ,  $t = 8.900$ ), which was statistically significant at the .05 level. The Cohen's  $d$  ( $d = 1.148$ ) and  $r^2$  ( $r^2 = .578$ ) measures of effect size further supported the statistical significance of these findings (see Table 24).

Table 24

*Results of Independent Samples t Test and Statistical Measures of Effect: Inspiring a Shared Vision*

		Measures of the effect		t test for equality of means						
									95% confidence interval of the difference	
		Cohen's <i>d</i>	<i>r</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>MD</i>	<i>SED</i>	Lower	Upper
Inspiring	Equal variances assumed	1.418	.578	8.900	154	56.898	9.54611	1.07271	7.42749	10.81692
	Equal variances not assumed			8.823	104.01	56.898	9.54611	1.08207	7.40023	10.83548

*Null Hypothesis 3:* No statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant leadership when compared to the public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of challenging the process.

Null Hypothesis 3 was rejected for the functional attribute and leadership practice of challenging the process. The servant leader mean score was 54.89, and the nonservant leader mean score was 48.19, for a mean difference of 6.70 ( $F = 14.546$ ,  $t = 7.426$ ), which was statistically significant at the .05 level. The Cohen's  $d$  ( $d = 1.184$ ) and  $r^2$  ( $r^2 = .509$ ) measures of effect size further supported the statistical significance of these findings (see Table 25).

Table 25

*Results of Independent Samples t Test and Statistical Measures of Effect: Challenging the Process*

		Measures of the effect		<i>t</i> test for equality of means				95% confidence interval of the difference		
		Cohen's <i>d</i>	<i>r</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>MD</i>	<i>SED</i>	Lower	Upper
Challenging	Equal variances assumed	1.184	.509	7.426	154	14.546	6.69127	.90111	4.91114	8.47140
	Equal variances not assumed			7.364	106.492		6.69127	.90867	4.88984	8.49270

*Null Hypothesis 4:* No statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant leadership when compared to the public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of enabling others to act.

Null Hypothesis 4 was rejected for the functional attribute and leadership practice of enabling others to act. The servant leader mean score was 55.32, and the nonservant leader mean score was 47.83, for a mean difference of 7.49 ( $F = 16.017$ ,  $t = 7.323$ ), which was statistically significant at the .05 level. The Cohen's  $d$  ( $d = 1.665$ ) and  $r^2$  ( $r^2 = .639$ ) measures of effect size further supported the statistical significance of these findings (see Table 26).

Table 26

*Results of Independent Samples t Test and Statistical Measures of Effect: Enabling Others to Act*

		Measures of the effect		t test for equality of means						
									95% confidence interval of the difference	
		Cohen's <i>d</i>	<i>r</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>MD</i>	<i>SED</i>	Lower	Upper
Enabling	Equal variances assumed	1.665	.639	10.432	154	29.385	7.48529	.71756	6.06777	8.90281
	Equal variances not assumed			10.342	104.188		7.48529	.72380	6.05000	8.92058

*Null Hypothesis 5:* No statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant leadership when compared to the public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of encouraging the heart.

Null Hypothesis 5 was rejected for the functional attribute and leadership practice of encouraging the heart. The servant leader mean score was 54.42, and the nonservant leader mean score was 47.01, for a mean difference of 7.41 ( $F = 16.017$ ,  $t = 7.323$ ) which was statistically significant at the .05 level. The Cohen's  $d$  ( $d = 1.168$ ) and  $r^2$  ( $r^2 = .504$ ) measures of effect size further supported the statistical significance of these findings (see Table 27).

Table 27

*Results of Independent Samples t Test and Statistical Measures of Effect: Encouraging the Heart*

		Measures of the effect		t test for equality of means						
		Cohen's <i>d</i>	<i>r</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>MD</i>	<i>SED</i>	95% confidence interval of the difference	
									Lower	Upper
Encouraging	Equal variances assumed	1.168	.504	7.323	154	16.017	7.40473	1.01119	5.40713	9.40234
	Equal variances not assumed			7.268	112.680		7.40473	1.01884	5.38616	9.42331

### Summary

In Phase 1 of this study, the dependent variables were the overall scores on the SASL, and the independent variables were the demographics variables of the New Jersey superintendents. A multivariate test was conducted to determine whether the demographic variables (gender, educational experience, administrative experience, level of education, and ethnicity) were statistically significant and related to the overall self-assessment ratings provided by the SASL (Taylor, 2002). Chi-square tests revealed that no demographic variable was statistically significant to the overall SASL rating.

In Phase 2 of the study, the data analysis of the LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2003) provided a comprehensive assessment and an in-depth exploration of the leadership actions, behaviors, and characteristics of the sample of superintendents in New Jersey. The LPI analysis clearly illustrated that the servant leader mean scores were higher than those of the nonservant leaders, as well as the data for the total sample for each of the

five functional attributes of leadership (modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, encouraging the heart, and enabling others to act). The highest mean rating for the servant leaders (55.32) was in the attribute of enabling others to act, followed by challenging the process (54.80), encouraging the heart (54.42), modeling the way (53.54), and inspiring a shared vision (53.46). Based on these analyses, the researcher rejected five null hypotheses because of the statistically significant differences reported.

In addition to presenting the conclusions drawn from the literature review, the methodology, and the analysis of data, the researcher interprets the findings, presents their implications, and discusses the impact on social change in chapter 5. The chapter also includes recommendations to educators and suggests future paths of potential investigation.

## CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*Leaders we admire do not place themselves at the center; they place others there. They do not seek the attention of people; they give it to others. They do not focus on satisfying their own aims and desires; they look for ways to respond to the needs and interests of their constituents. They are not self-centered; they concentrate on the constituent. . . Leaders serve a purpose and the people who have made it possible for them to lead.*  
(Kouzes & Posner, 2000, pp. 109-110)

### Introduction

The role of school superintendent continues to evolve, changing from lead teacher and scholar to educational engineer, negotiator, business manager, politician, and CEO. With each shift in emphasis, the occupation of superintendent has focused less on curriculum and instruction and more on school reform (DuFour, 2004; Huston, 2002). The superintendent is an educational leader who must face the continuous flow of demands and complexities in times of great uncertainty and constant change. America's schools need effective leaders to shape and implement reform within the confines of a bureaucratic structure. Systemic change takes time and leadership.

This chapter presents the findings and includes a discussion of the implementation of Greenleaf's (1977) servant leadership model and the functional attributes by which positive results may be obtained in the school setting, as exhibited by New Jersey's public school superintendents. The limitations of the study and the impact of those limitations are discussed within the framework of the findings. In conclusion, this chapter reviews the implications for practice and offers recommendations for future research.

The purpose of the first phase of the research was to utilize the SASL (Taylor, 2002) to identify New Jersey public school superintendents who manifest the principles of servant leadership. The second phase of this study utilized Kouzes and Posner's (2003)



LPI, to assess the leadership effectiveness of those servant leaders through an in-depth exploration of their leadership actions, behaviors, and characteristics. The following questions guided the comparison and contrast of the servant leaders and the nonservant leaders throughout this study:

1. Does the practice of servant leadership by public school superintendents in New Jersey (SASL) impact their perceived effectiveness in the area of Inspiring a Shared Vision (LPI)?
2. Does the practice of servant leadership by public school superintendents in New Jersey (SASL) impact their perceived effectiveness in the area of Modeling the Way (LPI)?
3. Does the practice of servant leadership by public school superintendents in New Jersey (SASL) impact their perceived effectiveness in the area of Challenging the Process (LPI)?
4. Does the practice of servant leadership by public school superintendents in New Jersey (SASL) impact their perceived effectiveness in the area of Encouraging the Heart (LPI)?
5. Does the practice of servant leadership by public school superintendents in New Jersey (SASL) impact their perceived effectiveness in the area of Enabling Others to Act (LPI)?

In these research questions, the independent variable was the leadership style of the superintendent, and the dependent variable was the functional attributes of practice as determined by the LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). The overarching goal of this study was

to add to the current research on servant leadership by assessing the leadership effectiveness of servant leaders through the lens of the five functional attributes of leadership, as determined by Kouzes and Posner (2000, 2002, 2003): modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, encouraging the heart, and enabling others to act.

The five null hypotheses were critically evaluated to answer the aforementioned research questions.

- H1<sub>0</sub>*: No statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant leadership when compared to public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of modeling the way.
- H2<sub>0</sub>*: No statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant leadership when compared to public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of inspiring a shared vision.
- H3<sub>0</sub>*: No statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant leadership when compared to public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of challenging the process.

*H4<sub>0</sub>*: No statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant leadership when compared to public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of enabling others to act.

*H5<sub>0</sub>*: No statistically significant difference will be found in public school superintendents in New Jersey who practice the principles of servant leadership when compared to public school superintendents in New Jersey who do not practice the principles of servant leadership with regard to their perceived effectiveness in the area of encouraging the heart

Servant leaders look forward to and care for the future; they are able to foresee the potential future outcomes of decisions. They have an internal set of constructs that naturally allows them to complete many permutations about how a situation may be resolved. Foresight also is a characteristic that allows servant leaders to learn lessons from the past, capture the realities of the present, and accept the consequences of future actions (Greenleaf, 1996; Spears, 2004). Servant leaders have big dreams and think without the traditional boundaries of confinement. They have the ability to look at an organization, system, or a problem, and form a notion by mentally combining all of its characteristics or particulars (Senge, 2000). Servant leaders think beyond the scope and sequence of the mundane, day-to-day realities within an establishment; they have a mental discipline that requires practice and focus (Laub, 1999).

### Interpretation of the Findings

This study confirmed the contention that the individual components of the servant leadership model described in the literature are often agreed upon as highly desirable and highly sought after characteristics to be modeled by current public school superintendents (Milligan, 2003). The concept of servant leadership was introduced by Greenleaf (1977) for use in business and religious organizations. However, the importance of the facilitative and servant role of the organizational leader has tremendous potential in education, especially at a time when district leaders are under tremendous pressure to produce student outcome-based results, akin to that of a corporate growth or profit mission. Thus, servant leadership may be one key component in total school reform (Lambert, 2004).

Many of the 10 principles of servant leadership are can be highly connected to each other, so they are very difficult to separate into distinct beliefs. The following conclusions for each of the five functional attributes may provide school leaders with a synopsis of the findings of this study.

#### *Enabling Others to Act*

The quantitative evidence collected from the LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2003) illustrated that Enabling Others to Act is the most critical leadership practice. Other researchers have called upon the educational institution to create a culture and a climate that foster a sense of collaboration by creating an atmosphere of trust (Taylor, 2002). Practically applied, this leadership attribute calls on servant leaders to strengthen the team as a whole, but also, to assure that each member feels respected for individual worth

and contributions to the organization. The integration of the principles of servant leadership into the best practice of enabling others to act is the most clearly connected to the principles of persuasion and building community (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2003; Taylor, 2002).

In an atmosphere of trust and support, a vital part of enabling others is the sense of empowerment created by a leader who does not use positional authority when making decisions. The leader models a sense of community with collective energy and synergy in the workplace; the pinnacle of that effort is a community that is committed to one another's success and accomplishment.

### *Challenging the Process*

The quantitative evidence collected from the LPI illustrated that Challenging Others to Act is the second most critical leadership practice. Research has shown that educational institutions must seek innovative ways to teach school leaders how to take calculated risks and experiment with new and exciting ideas. Although risk may result in mistakes and failures, the only way to attempt to create a servant-led school is to attempt to do things in a different way; the fear of the unknown should be used in the prediction of outcomes, not in the rationale for avoidance. The integration of the principles of servant leadership into the best practice of challenging the process is most easily connected to the principles of listening and awareness (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2003; Taylor, 2002).

Much too often, leaders are so busy talking that they do not remain cognizant of the power of listening. Covey (1989) and Greenleaf (1977) postulated that listeners are

leaders who seek to understand first. In an organization of shared governance, equality is essential, and the traditional corporate hierarchy must be totally removed from the operation. Educational programs for the training of future school leaders should recommend and implement professional internships as another means of earning course credit. Practical application will enhance the development of leadership abilities in the next wave of school superintendents.

### *Encouraging the Heart*

The quantitative evidence collected from the LPI illustrated that Encouraging the Heart is the third most critical leadership practice. Research has shown that educational institutions must promote the overt celebration and recognition of the accomplishments of those within the organization. Leaders should recognize that in a winning team, all of the members of that team need to share in the reward, the celebration, and the joy. Servant leaders take extraordinary steps to recognize the worth, dignity, and contributions of human beings not only as employees but also as people (Kouzes & Posner, 2001). All people have value beyond their positions in the workplace; the interest that servant leaders take in all persons sets the tone for the school. The integration of the principles of servant leadership into the best practice of encouraging the heart is the most easily linked to stewardship and commitment to the growth of people (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2003; Taylor, 2002). The leader is steward of all of the resources; leadership is a tremendous responsibility beyond the stated goals of the organization. The servant leader cares deeply about the intellectual health and safety of all persons (Prolmann, 2002).

*Modeling the Way*

The quantitative evidence collected from the LPI illustrated that Modeling the Way is the fourth most critical leadership practice. Research has suggested that the servant leader is the ultimate role model for all to emulate. Leaders are charged with the creation of a set of standards that determine how goals should be pursued (Autry, 2004). Leaders also set an example for others to follow in words, actions, thoughts, and other overt behaviors. Leaders set the tone and the climate in their workplace each day; leaders know that the speed of the leader often is the speed of the follower (Spears, 2003). In conjunction with the aforementioned, leaders chart a course of small benchmarks that relate to the achievement of larger goals and objectives. The integration of the principles of servant leadership into the best practice of modeling the way is most naturally linked to the principles of empathy and healing (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2003; Taylor, 2002).

*Inspiring a Shared Vision*

The quantitative evidence collected from the LPI illustrated that Inspiring a Shared Vision is the fifth most critical leadership practice. Research has suggested that the servant leader is the ultimate role model for all to emulate. One of the hallmarks of great leaders is the innate belief and unconditional notion that they can make a difference through others (Laub, 1999). Leaders envision the future, creating an image of the greatest possible potential of the organization. They have an irrational sense of hope for the future (Autry, 2004). Leaders seek to enlist others in their dreams as they breathe life into their visions and provide people with an enthusiastic setting in which they can do their very best work (Laub, 1999). The integration of the principles of servant leadership

into the best practice of Inspiring a Shared Vision is most clearly linked to the principles of conceptualization and foresight (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2003; Taylor, 2002).

It seems only logical to the researcher that the role of the school superintendent begins with respect for all persons within the organization, a leader whose first priority is that of fostering a positive learning climate within a professional learning community. The researcher views servant leadership more as a way of being, that is, an intrinsic belief system of service to a need more important than self and a lens through which the world is viewed. The researcher further does not believe that servant leadership is a style or a practice that can be learned. People can quickly adopt individual and discrete aspects of it, but they cannot become servant leaders under false pretences. There is too much required of the servant leader to simply put on a good show. Service is an inward attitude that a true servant leader can bring to any situation, under any circumstances, at any time. It necessitates a caring and committed individual who creates a new reality of service to all and nurtures the common good within an organization. In this study, the focus was a school district and its superintendents.

#### Implications for Social Change

As mentioned in chapter 1, Walden University (2006) provided a clear and distinct definition of social change as “a deliberate process of creating and applying ideas, strategies, and actions to promote the worth, dignity, and development of individuals, communities, organizations, institutions, cultures, and societies.” Servant leadership has tremendous potential to influence positive social change, one of the core missions of Walden University. This philosophy contributes to the creation of an



environment that invites people to belong, to have a personal impact, and to be empowered.

The school leader is the most critical figure in the process of school reform (Fullan, 2000). No change, be it large or small, can have even a glimmer of hope without the direct and indirect support of the school superintendent. The leaders of this century may not provide the idea, but they must provide a distinct series and set of encouragements in order to impact student learning (DuFour, 2004). The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) has a new set of standards for school leaders that include promoting shared values and shared decision making, sustaining and promoting a school culture aligned with learning outcomes for all students, managing operations with integrity, and communicating with communities and families. Gone are the requirements of management of the status quo; in its place is the search for ways to build successful and effective relationships to empower others toward a common goal (Fullan, 2000; Senge, 2006). In their efforts to craft model standards for school leadership, deeply rooted in successful, research-based principles and theory, the ISLLC also is seeking a practical and applicable set of raw material to give to school leaders to connect theory to practice. The essential component of any leadership consortium is to equip the leaders with as many tools as possible toward the creation of productive schools that serve their social purpose (Senge, 2005).

Although the utilization of the principles of servant leadership can be applied to any leadership paradigm, the focus of this study was on the implications for practice in the field of education as a means of social change. If servant leadership is relevant and

effective, as this study concluded, then its significance in the field of educational administration must be grounded in educational leadership training programs. As colleges and universities prepare future school leaders to lead, their educational leadership program curricula should be modified to include the principles of servant leadership in conjunction with practical application. Documented case studies that illustrate the application of leadership theory in a real context are an integral aspect of most administrative courses. This process provides for mastery of the principles of servant leadership, and the functional attributes of practical application should be mastered at multiple levels throughout the graduate program of leadership.

In enabling school leaders to be successful, mentoring components for support in the provisional years should utilize the leadership practices model as a framework for assessing the tangible outcomes of on-the-job training. It is critical that efforts be extended beyond formal classroom instruction to reach the practicing school administrators. This researcher believes that provisional school leaders should be required to attend continuing education courses and seminars on topics that are paramount to effective leadership. In this model, the principles of servant leadership will ensure that the next generation of educational leaders are simply not the next wave of management (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

The fundamental processes of servant leadership lead directly to maximizing personal involvement and a stake in the shared governance process. In today's society, many feel a sense of disconnect and a lack of satisfaction. At this moment in education, it is both the best of times and the worst of times; the risks have never been greater, but the

potential rewards also have the largest potential to make a difference in the lives of the students whom we all serve.

### Recommendations for Action

There is much that we do not yet know about servant leadership, but it is a concept that holds tremendous promise because it is in harmony with the real needs of schools (Egri & Herman, 2000). It is firmly rooted in and reflects the very best of what it means to be a human in this world. Servant leadership remains an ideal interpersonal leadership practice, considered to represent the best of the human species, as it matches with our human nature and fulfills our own needs.

The time for public patience appears to be over; people are prepared and are demanding a sense of servant leadership from those in positions of power. Servant leadership requires a value system, a sense of commitment, and a spirit that have no bounds. It is a call-to-arms in education. A school-based learning community cannot simply expect servant leaders to appear at each school's doorsteps. Servant leadership is a union of a person's mission and the personal ability for people to explore their leadership potential. Greenleaf worked within a large corporate context his whole adult life, yet he described himself as one who got inside a large institution; listened to the critics; and when he found the right moment, did something about it (as cited in Spears, 2004).

Milligan (2003) postulated that in the illustration of servant leadership, the most crucial figure is that of the shepherd. Gallagher (2002) drew a clear contrast between the shepherd and simple cattlemen in terms of leadership versus management. The cattlemen scare their herds and generate cattle who will respond to them simply out of fear of pain

or punishment. The cattle never quite know their destination or their shared purpose, but they respond the same as the sheep. However, the sheep, in contrast to frightened cattle, willingly follow the shepherd because they know that he or she loves and protects them. The shepherd shows them the way. This is the servant leader.

The most important job a board of education undertakes is hiring the superintendent. Too many board members are not prepared for this responsibility. They have limited knowledge of how to screen and conduct interviews, and they frequently must rely on private consultant firms or organizations to conduct searches and assist in the selection of candidates. In-depth and on-going in-service needs to be provided for school board members who employ the servant leader and set high expectations. Thus, a paradigm shift in the organization may be necessary. A collaborative effort between the state's administrative association and the state's school board association to provide these kinds of inservice is suggested. In order for a servant leader to be leading in a fashion rich in the principles of the belief system, prior assessment of the organization is critical to determine the future direction and goal-setting outcomes (Senge, 2005).

This study may provide information that leads to a clearer understanding of the conditions that contribute to superintendent turnover. The findings may prove valuable to individuals aspiring to the superintendency, to practicing superintendents, to educational professional organizations, as well as to institutions of higher education that offer training and coursework leading to administrative certification. The results of the study will be shared with the individuals who participated in the study who requested them and with the Communications Officer of the New Jersey Association of School Administrators,

which represents all of the school superintendents in this state. The study in its entirety also will be available on Walden University's ProQuest access point, and it will be presented at the annual retreat for New Jersey school superintendents.

#### Recommendations for Further Study

Although the research on servant leadership is growing dramatically, very few studies of servant leadership solely in the public school setting have been conducted (McCrimmon, 2008; Senge, 2005). As the quantity and quality of the research evolves, there is an assumption that an increased understanding of the implications of this belief system for leadership will be gained. With the recent increases in local and national reform, coupled with massive efforts for standards-based education, further research will add to the current body of knowledge. In addition, it is recommended that this study be conducted in other states, to determine if there are differences or similarities in leadership styles and strategies so that the results may become more generalizable.

In addition, this study compared self-perceived leadership skills and strategies of New Jersey superintendents. A study that presents the perceptions of others to include teachers, principals, administrators, parents, or members of the local board of education may shed light on perceived practices versus actual practices, thus continuing to expand this important body of knowledge. An additional study of such a nature could utilize Kouzes and Posner's (2003) LPI, which assesses the functional attributes of servant leadership from the viewpoint of those being served by the superintendent. It also would provide an outstanding quantitative comparison of the superintendents' perceptions in contrast to the perceptions of individuals surrounding the superintendent.

A future study may wish to explore the qualitative aspects of superintendents whose SASL and/or LPI scores were in the top 10<sup>th</sup> percentile to research such critical questions as, “What challenges are presented to the servant leader?” and “Are there aspects of this leadership belief system that concern you as you face potential conflicts which do not always result in a win-win conclusion?” Questions that seek to know why an individual chooses to be a servant leader would reveal whether it is a genuine desire to serve others or just the adoption of a current trend (McCrimmon, 2008).

Looking through the lens of Page and Wong’s (1998) work, a future study may be conducted to determine whether there are characteristics common to servant leaders, because there is no accepted listing of servant leadership characteristics. Unlike other forms of leadership that can be reduced to a functional list of behaviors, servant leadership emphasizes intrinsic thoughts and actions. Servant leadership can be a challenge to quantify, although this study is one of the first attempts to quantify this style.

Finally, as the ultimate pinnacle of school leadership, a future research endeavor may seek answers to the essential question, “What is the relationship between servant leadership in the school setting and increased student achievement?” This study would help to determine if servant leadership characteristics or behaviors are exhibited in leaders who serve schools where student performance is exceptional. This could be especially helpful in urban school settings where leadership is a critical element of the total school program (Hughes, 2002).

### Research Process/Researcher Bias

One of the most significant limitations noted in this study was the lack of a universally agreed upon definition of leadership. Because a survey permits only a superficial gauge of one person's experiences, the results of this study may not be generalized to all facets of educational leadership. As with any study, the findings may be subject to a myriad of interpretations.

The researcher believes that the superintendents who participated in this study were active in the educational process and were willing to participate in studies that affect education. Furthermore, the researcher expected that the superintendents would actively participate in this study and would do so to reflect on their own leadership. Servant leadership assessment is more than simply a set of questions; it is a highly personal self-assessment that requires some modicum of self-confidence and reflection. Although the researcher is passionate about servant leadership in the school setting, he acknowledges that not every superintendent shares in the same belief system. The researcher was extremely conscious in assuring the complete and total anonymity from start to finish of the other superintendents who participated freely and of their own choosing. The data collection and data analysis processes were totally anonymous to the researcher; all summative data were detailed in chapter 4 in cohorts with absolutely no individuality of any kind.

In addition, every effort was made to conduct an objective study and bias-free data collection and analysis. Some of the participants were known in a personal or professional capacity to the researcher; however, that did not have had any impact on the

findings and results. Like other public servants, superintendents share a special bond that promotes, at times, a sense of blind faith in one another. This study was about enhancing and expanding a critical body of knowledge, not about casting judgment or aspersion on anyone.

The researcher did not expect to find such a significant difference in the characteristics of servant leadership versus nonservant leadership in the functional attributes. After reviewing the data, however, it became apparent that there was a difference. Although a small number of the participants stated that quantitative research is quicker for the purposes of participation, they also indicated that the study provided them with a “metacognitive moment” to think about their own thinking. Thus, a qualitative version of this study will be a potential future challenge for this researcher.

#### Summary

Leaders are not born knowing the principles of servant leadership; however, truly effective and principled leadership is less about style and more about the content and substance of one’s character. Thus, underestimating servant leadership as a strategy to be used from time to time greatly devalues its potential contribution to the world of education. Rather, it is a lens through which to view the world (Greenleaf, 1977; Wong, 1997). Servant leadership may look different, depending upon such factors as how, where, when, and with whom the leader interacts.

The greatest gift that a servant leader can give is the gift of time for others to learn, to serve, and to have the opportunity to grow (Greenleaf, 1991). Growth is not measured by the power that the school leader holds, but through the leader’s ability to



empower others. Maximizing one's self-sufficiency and creativity will give other education professionals the ability to make decisions and choose alternatives (Wheatley, 1999).

Although educational leadership has not yet fully integrated servant leadership into its daily repertoire, it is clear that many of the superintendents in New Jersey serve unconditionally. New leadership practices such as servant leadership may serve as a blueprint for visionary and ethical leaders who value integrity and believe in the process of providing an outstanding education to every child. This study will contribute to the body of knowledge needed to address this problem because the educational leadership of the new millennium requires power and influence, not from position but from service to others as a steward of all resources. Thus, it can be stated that one who seeks to lead must dare to serve first.

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## APPENDIX A: SASL

### Self-Assessment of Servant Leadership

This instrument was designed for individuals to monitor themselves on several leadership characteristics. Please use the following scale to indicate your agreement or disagreement with each of the descriptors of your leadership.

Strongly Disagree      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Strongly Agree  
Undecided

For example, if you strongly agree, you may type in a number 7, if you mildly disagree, you may type in a 3. If you are undecided, type in a number 4, but use this category sparingly.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I am genuine and candid with people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I learn from subordinates whom I serve.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I am willing to make personal sacrifices in serving others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I genuinely care for the welfare of people working with me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I consistently encourage others to take initiative.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I have great satisfaction in bringing out the best in others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. My leadership is based on a strong sense of mission.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I am very focused and disciplined at work.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I usually come up with solutions accepted by others as helpful and effective.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I lead by example.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I am willing to sacrifice personal benefits to promote group harmony and team success.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I am willing to have my ideas challenged.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. I practice what I preach.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. I readily admit when I am wrong.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. I have a heart to serve others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. Many people come to me with their problems, because I listen to them with empathy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. I continuously appreciate, recognize, and encourage the work of others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I invest considerable time and energy equipping others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I am able to inspire others with my enthusiasm and confidence for what can be accomplished.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. I am able to motivate others to achieve beyond their own expectations in getting a job done.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. I try to match people with their jobs in order to optimize productivity.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. I often demonstrate for others how to make decisions and solve problems.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. I encourage cooperation rather than competition through the group.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. I place the greatest amount of decision-making in the hands of those most affected by the decisions.

Note: The SASL Instrument is a modification of "The Self-Assessment of Servant Leadership Profile," by Page, D. and T.P. Wong. (1998) *A conceptual framework for measuring servant leadership*, Unpublished manuscript, Trinity Western University, Langley, British Columbia, Canada. p. 20. Modified by T.A. Taylor, (2002). Used by permission.

## APPENDIX B: THE LPI

# JAMES M. KOUZES/BARRY Z. POSNER LEADERSHIP PRACTICES INVENTORY [LPI] SELF

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### INSTRUCTIONS

Write your name in the blank above. On the next two pages are thirty statements describing various leadership behaviors. Please read each carefully. Then look at the rating scale and decide *how frequently you engage in the behavior* described.

Here's the rating scale that you'll be using:

- |                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1 = Almost Never    | 6 = Sometimes       |
| 2 = Rarely          | 7 = Fairly Often    |
| 3 = Seldom          | 8 = Usually         |
| 4 = Once in a While | 9 = Very Frequently |
| 5 = Occasionally    | 10 = Almost Always  |

In selecting each response, please be realistic about the extent to which you *actually* engage in the behavior. Do *not* answer in terms of how you would like to see yourself or in terms of what you should be doing. Answer in terms of how you *typically* behave-on most days, on most projects, and with most people.

For each statement, decide on a rating and record it in the blank to the left of the statement. When you have responded to all thirty statements, turn to the response sheet on page 4. *Make sure that you write your name on the response sheet* in the blank marked "Your Name." Transfer your responses and return the response sheet according to the instructions provided.

For future reference, keep the portion of your LPI-Self form that lists the thirty statements.

## LEADERSHIP PRACTICES INVENTORY [LPI]

### SELF

To what extent do you typically engage in the following behaviors? Choose the number that best applies to each statement and *record it in the blank to the left of the statement.*

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Almost Never	Rarely	Seldom	Once in a While	Occasionally	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Usually	Very Frequently	Almost Always

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I seek out challenging opportunities that test my own skills and abilities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I talk about future trends that will influence how our work gets done.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I develop cooperative relationships among the people I work with.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I set a personal example of what I expect from others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I praise people for a job well done.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I challenge people to try out new and innovative approaches to their work.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I describe a compelling image of what our future could be like.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I actively listen to diverse points of view
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I spend time and energy on making certain that the people I work with adhere to the principles and standards that we have agreed on.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I make it a point to let people know about my confidence in their abilities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I search outside the formal boundaries of my organization for innovative ways to improve what we do.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I appeal to others to share an exciting dream of the future.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. I treat others with dignity and respect.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. I follow through on the promises and commitments that I make.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. I make sure that people are creatively rewarded for their contributions to the success of our projects.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Almost Never	Rarely	Seldom	Once in a While	Occasionally	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Usually	Very Frequently	Almost Always

- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. I ask "What can we learn?" when things do not go as expected.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. I show others how their long-term interests can be realized by enlisting in a common vision.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I support the decisions that people make on their own.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I am clear about my philosophy of leadership.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. I publicly recognize people who exemplify commitment to shared values.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. I experiment and take risks even when there is a chance of failure.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. I am contagiously enthusiastic and positive about future possibilities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. I give people a great deal of freedom and choice in deciding how to do their work.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. I make certain that we set achievable goals, make concrete plans, and establish measurable milestones for the projects and programs that we work on.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. I find ways to celebrate accomplishments.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 26. I take the initiative to overcome obstacles even when outcomes are uncertain.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 27. I speak with genuine conviction about the higher meaning and purpose of our work.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 28. I ensure that people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 29. I make progress toward goals one step at a time.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 30. I give the members of the team lots of appreciation and support for their contributions.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

John Alfieri

### EDUCATION

- Ed. D., Educational Administration, Richard W. Riley College of Education, Walden University at Minneapolis, Spring 2009
- M. Ed., Educational Administration and Supervision, William Paterson University, 1996
- B.S., Business Administration and Finance, Montclair State University, 1991
- Certifications: School Administrator (Standard)
  - School Business Administrator
  - Principal/Supervisor

### ADMINISTRATIVE

- 2007-Present Superintendent, Hunterdon County School District, NJ
- 2002-2007 Principal, Short Hills, NJ
- 1997-2002 Principal, West Orange, NJ
- 1996-1997 Assistant Principal Sparta, NJ

### TEACHING

- 2006-2008 Adjunct Professor, Department of Education, College of Saint Elizabeth, Morristown, NJ
- 1992-1996 Grade 4 Teacher, Parsippany-Troy Hills Township Schools, Parsippany, NJ
- 1991-1992 Grade 6 Mathematics Teacher, Totowa, NJ