## Transformational and Servant Leadership: Content and Contextual Comparisons

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The purpose of the study is to examine conceptual similarities of transformational and servant leadership theories and analyze the contribution both theories make to understanding of leadership. The paper examines the extent the domains of the two theories overlap, and looks at the motivation of managers to create organizational cultures using one or the other perspectives. suggested that servant leadership leads to a culture. spiritual generative while transformational leadership leads empowered dynamic culture. The paper also addresses contextual factors which might make one or the other models more appropriate for organizational objectives. It is suggested that change environments require empowered dynamic culture of transformational leadership, while more static environments are better served by the servant leadership culture.

For the last twenty years, the topic of leadership has become popular among scholars. Considerable research on this topic has appeared in the literature (Avolio & Yammarino, 2002; Dansereau & Yammarino, 1998). However, there is still no comprehensive understanding of what leadership is, nor is there an agreement among different theorists on what good or effective leadership should be. The most popular leadership theories currently being discussed by researchers include charismatic, transactional, transformational and servant leadership.

Charismatic leadership is based on extraordinary characteristics of a leader who inspires and directs followers by building their commitment to a shared vision and values (Hellriegel, Slocum, Woodman, 2001; Conger &

Kanungo, 1998). Many current theories of leadership attempt to address some components of the charismatic construct.

Transactional leadership is a process of social exchange between followers and leaders that involves a number of reward-based transactions. The transactional leader clarifies performance expectations, goals, and a path that will link achievement of the goals to rewards. The leader also monitors followers' performance and takes corrective actions when necessary (Burns, 1978; Graen & Cashman, 1975; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Hollander, 1993; Yukl, 1994; Bass, 1996).

Transformational leadership occurs when a leader inspires followers to share a vision, empowering them to achieve the vision, and provides the resource necessary for developing their personal potential. Transformational leaders serve as role models, support optimism and mobilize commitment, as well as focus on the followers' needs for growth (Bass, 1996; Bass & Avolio, 1988, 1994a, 1994b).

Servant leadership views a leader as a servant of his/her followers. It places the interest of followers before the self-interest of a leader, emphasizes personal development and empowerment of followers. The servant leader is a facilitator for followers to achieve a shared vision (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 1998; Spears & Lawrence, 2002; Laub, 1999).

The purpose of the present paper is to major review components of both transformational and servant leadership, and to compare these two theories, specifically highlighting theoretical similarities differences. The authors provide contextual

analysis of these theories and suggest that application of the two theories leads to significantly different organizational cultures, which are more or less appropriate to the context in which an organization operates.

#### Charismatic Leadership as a Foundation

Transformational and servant leadership are rooted in the study of charismatic leadership. An early conceptual model of "charismatic leadership" has been closely linked with the work of Max Weber, who described the leader as a charismatic person who exercised power through followers' identification with and belief in the leader's personality. However, Trice and Beyer (1986) argued that charismatic leadership requires more than just extraordinary personal characteristics. Indeed, current research in charismatic leadership is focused on a number of defining variables including charismatic leader behavior, characteristics of the followers and charismatic leader-follower relationship, contextual influences and constraints, and liabilities of charismatic leadership (Conger & Kanungo, 1998; House & Shamir 1993; House & Howell, 1992; Bass & Avolio, 1988, 1994a, 1994b; Bass, 1996; May, Hodges, Chan, Avolio, 2003).

A study by Graham (1991) compared Weberian charismatic authority, personal celebrity charisma, transformational leadership, and servant leadership and argued that charismatic leadership the theoretical is underpinning for each of these leadership She concluded that transformational and servant leadership are both inspirational and moral. She further suggested. however, that the two models differ, and that servant leadership allows for more passive followers.

What is not clear is the universality of transformational leadership. Specifically, are both of these theories sufficient in all contexts, or do the contexts, in which organizations exist, make one or the other of these approaches to leadership more appropriate? The following sections will address transformational and servant leadership in more detail, before addressing similarities and contextual appropriateness.

#### **Transformational Leadership**

Transformational leadership has conceptualized as containing four behavioral components: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation. individualized consideration (Bass, 1985, 1996; Bass & Avolio, 1994a, 1994b). Bass claims that some leaders may be charismatic but not transformational in terms of their effect on Specifically, Bass contends that followers. intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration are not wholly charismatic in nature.

Intellectual stimulation refers to a leader's behavior that encourages followers' creativity and stimulates innovative thinking. According to Bass (1996), transformational leaders are tolerant to followers' mistakes. They involve followers in problem solving and are open to new ideas. Individualized consideration refers to the role a transformational leader plays in developing followers' potential and paying attention their individual needs to achievement and growth. A transformational leader strives to create new learning opportunities for followers and tends to act as a coach or mentor. Transformational leaders create and utilize two-way personalized communications with followers.

Other relevant components of transformational leadership will be discussed in more detail as comparisons with servant leadership are made later in the paper.

#### Servant Leadership

Recently, the concept of servant leadership has been introduced to the leadership literature. Robert Greenleaf, the founder of the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, conceptualized the idea of the servant leader. In his vision, the leader is first seen as a servant to others. The servant assumes a non-focal position within a group, providing resources and support without an expectation of acknowledgement. Through repeated servant behaviors, these individuals eventually emerge as pivotal for group survival and are thrust into a leadership position. Greenleaf suggests that these people were not initially motivated to be leaders, but assume this position in response to the urgings of others and in response to the need for group success.

Greenleaf contrasts servant leadership with the more traditional model of leadership where the individual may begin with an aspiration to lead others. He presented the leader-first and the servant-first types of leaders as two opposite ends of a continuum. Greenleaf emphasized the importance of a leader's motivation, to serve or to lead, as an identification of servant leadership. Greenleaf claimed that leadership is primarily the result of personal characteristics rather than leadership techniques. according to Greenleaf writings, a servant leader has to display a number of special skills like listening receptively, persuading, articulating and communicating ideas effectively (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears & Lawrence, 2002).

Typically models of leadership do not begin with an analysis of leader motivation, and Greenleaf's concepts in this regard are unique. However, we intend to show that a careful reading of many of Greenleaf's concepts regarding leader behaviors are similar to the formulations of charismatic leadership proposed by Conger and Kanungo (1998), Bass (1996) and Bass and Avolio (1994a, 1994b). Although the concepts and the terminology may seem similar, the difference between leadership and other leadership models is that servant leadership may produce a different type of culture because of the underlying motivation of the leader.

Greenleaf did not provide any definitions of servant leadership. Instead, he focused on specific behaviors of a servant leader, and on influence a servant leader has on followers. Some authors have attempted to couch servant leadership in spiritual and moral terms (c.f., Wicks, 2002). For example Sims (cited in Laub, 1999) defined servant leadership in the following way: "to honor the personal dignity and worth of all who are led and to evoke as much as possible their own innate creative power for leadership" (p.10-11).

Laub (1999) summarized the concept of servant leadership and a servant leader into a servant organization model. According to Laub's interpretation the model can be conceptualized in the following way.

"Servant leadership is an understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader. Servant leadership promotes the valuing and development of people, the building of community, the practice of authenticity, the providing of leadership for the good of those led and the sharing of power and status for the common good of each individual, the total organization and those served by the organization" (p.83).

Though the organization and external stakeholders are mentioned, it is clear that needs of the members of the organization are placed in priority over organizational success.

A servant leader views leadership not as position or status, but as an opportunity to serve others, to develop them to their full potential. Greenleaf believed the final goal of servanthood was to help others become servants themselves so that society would benefit as well. In servant leadership, personal development is not limited to the followers, but the leader also benefits from the developmental process.

#### **Theoretical Comparison**

This section compares transformational and leadership servant theories and suggests competing implications for organizational success. To facilitate this analysis, a matrix of leadership components was created (see Table Transformational leadership is defined as having four conceptually distinct elements: leadership/idealized charismatic inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1996). Servant leadership has six distinct components: valuing people, developing people, building community, displaying authenticity, providing leadership, sharing leadership (Laub, 1999). Each of these dimensions has a number of specific behaviors that have been suggested in the literature (Bass, 1996; Bass & Avolio, 1994a; Laub, 1999; Graham, 1991.) These behaviors are listed under the dimension heading in Table 1. Two questions are addressed in this analysis. The first asks the extent to which the specified leader behaviors overlap in the two The second question examines the models. extent to which each model may be appropriate for clearly distinct contexts.

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Transformational leadership	Charismatic leadership/	Inspirational motivation - Motivate and inspire followers	Intellectual stimulation - Encourage innovation and	- Attention to followers needs for
1004b: Bees 1085 1906)	- Role modeling	- Display enthusiasm and optimism	creativity	achievement and growth
19740; Dass, 1703, 1770)	- Emphasis on the needs of others	- Communicate expectations and	- Willing to abandon not useful	- Create new learning opportunities
	- High ethical and moral conduct	create shared vision	practices and systems	- Empower to make decisions
			- Kisk taking is necessary for foug- term success	
Servant leadership				
(Spears, 1998; Laub, 1999)				
Values people	Serve other's needs before their	Believe in people		
- Believe in people	own			
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Develops people	Model appropriate benavior	Libourge miss arrangement		
- Provide opportunities to learn				
and grow				
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Puilds community	Strong interpersonal relationships	Strong interpersonal relationships		Collaboration with others
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others				
- Willing to learn from others				
- Maintain integrity and trust				
Provides leadership		Envision the future	l ake initiative	
- Envision the future		Clarity goals		
- Take initiative				
- Clarify goals				Character and enlance control
Shares leadership		Facilitate a shared vision		Share power and recase connections
- Facilitate a shared vision				Slidic status and promote corres
- Share power and release				
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others				
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\* Behaviors in the cells represent those behaviors common to both theories

#### Question One - Model Overlap

The first question requires a comparison of the behaviors specified by each dimension of the models. Similar to Antonakis and House (2002), the authors developed a matrix comparing components of leadership models. In Table 1, the horizontal axis exhibits components of leadership along transformational with representative behaviors for each of the dimensions. The vertical axis exhibits the components and behaviors of servant leadership as proposed by Laub (1999) and others (Spears & Lawrence, 2002). In order to complete the matrix, the three authors independently studied the component behaviors and matched the dimensions of the two theories. As a group, they met to reconcile any differences in their individual assessment of the overlap. The final result of their analysis and discussions are shown in Table 1.

In observing the matrix, it appears that a number of the behaviors that are suggested to be part of each theory correspond with the behaviors of the other theory. When viewed at the level of the theoretical dimensions, three of the four dimensions of transformational leadership exhibit a substantial match with the components of servant leadership. words, much of servant leadership may be subsumed within the transformational leadership model. Beazley and Beggs (2002) claim theory "Greenleaf's is a form transformational leadership that is consonant with other leadership concepts such stewardship, system thinking and the learning organization." An analysis of the columns reveals that servant leadership does not substantially account for the behaviors of the intellectual stimulation dimension. An analysis rows, however, reveals transformational leadership has less emphasis on leader behaviors associated with the valuing of individuals at an emotional level and less emphasis on learning from others.

Proponents of servant leadership may argue that developing people and providing leadership requires some degree of intellectual stimulation. For example, Freeman, Isaksen, and Dorval (2002) in their essay on servant leadership and creativity argue that servant leadership tends to

utilize the diversity of existing forms of creativity. They describe revolutionary (new thinking, out of box) and evolutionary (improved thinking inside the box) forms of creativity. Their conclusion is that servant leadership does not eliminate "out of box thinking." A careful reading of the discussion of these concepts within servant leadership suggests, however, that the terms as described are focused more on personal growth of the followers, or on leader-centered initiatives, rather than on change and development of the organization itself (i.e., more revolutionary thinking).

Some characteristics of intellectual stimulation like encouragement and affirmation, and initiative taking do appear in servant leadership. but in a different context. Encouragement and affirmation in servant leadership refer to developing people's potential and facilitating their personal growth, whereas in transformational leadership, encouragement relates to innovation and creativity. Thus, by encouraging innovation and creativity, a transformational leader would tolerate possible mistakes of the followers for the sake of the benefits from their innovative endeavors. A servant leader, on the other hand, would encourage followers to learn and would support them by providing opportunities to both obtain the knowledge and apply it within the company to obtain a new level of responsibility. In other words, an encouraging servant leader does not necessarily promote innovations and creativity for the sake of the organization.

Initiative taking in servant leadership refers to the provision of leadership, and can be interpreted in this context as a leader's activity related to taking additional responsibility for the future of the company and its success, such as beginning strategic planning processes or implementing new programs for efficiency. However, the servant-leader model does not stress risk-taking behavior as an essential attribute of organizational success. transformational leadership, on the other hand, the leader's initiative is strongly associated with risk taking as the necessary element of future success, as well as with the willingness to switch to the more effective practices and systems.

As seen in the matrix, servant leadership stresses a leader's concern for the follower's well-being reflected in receptive non-judgmental listening and willingness to learn from others. These behaviors are not accounted for by any behaviors in the transformational model. Furthermore. the conclusion that servant leadership engenders a more "sensitive" leadership style has been identified by other authors. For example, Graham (1991) and Kim, Dansereau, and Kim (2002) contrast servant and transformational leadership and suggest that servant leadership is more concerned with the emotional needs of employees and other organizational stakeholders.

In sum, by comparing the models we have made two arguments. First, servant leadership does not account for the intellectual stimulation component of transformational leadership. Second, servant leaders have a leadership style that is more concerned about employees' emotional well-being then does transformational leadership. Our matrix appears to confirm the assertion of Peter Senge (as cited in Carver, 2002, p.191) that Greenleaf "invites people to consider a domain of leadership grounded in a state of being, not doing" as compared to other leadership approaches. It is apparent that each theory has some unique contribution and it is therefore our assertion that organizational success is dependent on the match between the leadership behaviors suggested by the theories and the contextual requirements.

#### **Question Two – Contextual Constraints**

The second question raised in this analysis refers to the nature of the contexts that may be appropriate for either servant leadership or transformational leadership approaches. As discussed previously, there is considerable overlap in the behaviors specified by the two Further, the leader's motivation for behaving is a critical distinction between the two theories. If servant and transformational leadership lead to the same kinds organizational outcomes regardless of the organizational mission or context, then servant leadership offers little additional insight into the leadership construct than does transformational leadership. It is suggested here that neither of these two assertions are true. Indeed, the primary proposition of this paper is that the two styles do not lead to the same outcomes and they are appropriate for different contexts.

The leader's context, as defined here, may include either broad organizational characteristics environmental or external characteristics. With regard to organizational characteristics, Pawar and Eastman (1997) have suggested that there are positive and negative polar type organizations that will be more or less receptive to transformational leadership. Further, Baliga and Hunt (1988) argued that organizational life cycle plays an important role in defining the extent of transformational leadership. They concluded that contemporary leadership theory ignores "leadership requirements of organizations as they move from one phase of the life cycle to another" (p.149). Baliga and Hunt have proposed an organizational life cycle approach to leadership, which, among other things, offers patterns of leadership behavior appropriate for each stage of a life cycle. During the birth stage, transactional leadership behaviors take primacy. They argue that as organizations move past the maturity stage of the life cycle, transformational behaviors are needed to revitalize organizational processes.

Gibbons (1992) draws attention to the external organizational environment as one of the factors shaping the degree of transformational leadership. He proposed a conceptual framework to determine leaderrelationships that follower fit specific environmental settings. Gibbons concludes, "different environmental conditions impact the nature of the leadership challenge" (p. 15). Gibbons identifies centralized decision making as being most efficient in situations of low complexity and low scarcity of resources. This context becomes leader-centric. Gibbons avers that the charismatic leader has more time to make decisions and may be more effective in these instances. On the other hand, in situations of high complexity and high resource scarcity, the leader is in a minimal choice situation. The decision-making role shifts to the followers throughout an organization, transforming the organization into a team-based structure in which the leader's charismatic becomes less important.

Analyzing the link between leadership behavior and organizational transformation, researchers (Bass & Avolio, 1988; Pettigrew, 1987; Pettigrew, Ferlie & McKee, 1992) have identified analytical deficiencies in existing leadership research. Among them Pettigrew, Ferlie, and McKee (1992) mention "the limited attempts to place leader behavior in the context of political and cultural forces within the organization, and the wider economic and competitive forces within which the firm must operate" (p. 655).

The servant leadership literature is similarly void of reference to the contextual influences. However, the Greenleaf Center suggests that the servant leadership concept can be applied as an institutional philosophy, a model in for-profit as well as not-for-profit organizations, trustee education, community leadership organizations, experiential and leadership education, and, finally, in training programs related to personal and spiritual growth (Spears, 1998). Whereas proponents of servant leadership would argue that the theory is not limited to these contexts, we would suggest that certain characteristics of these situations make servant leadership more appropriate. Our analytical framework demonstrates how we can justify the choice of leadership in different contexts.

### Servant and Transformational Leadership: A Comparative Model

As suggested earlier, transformational leadership and servant leadership have many of the same qualities. To further clarify the distinction between servant and transformational leadership theories, we propose a comparative model. One of the purposes of this comparative model is to address the issue of the universality. A limitation of universal theories is that they don't give specific guidance to individual leaders on how to apply the theory to their contexts. Both servant and transformational leadership claim to be universal theories (Avolio & Yammarino, 2002; Spears & Lawrence, 2002; Antonakis & House, 2002). That is, each theory is sufficient to make predictions across all situations. We propose that servant leadership will lead to a "spiritual generative culture" while transformational leadership will lead to an

"empowered dynamic culture." These cultures result from the philosophy associated with the leader's motivation, and they may not lead to organizational success in all contexts. An analysis of the initiatives of leaders under each model shows how the specified leader behaviors might result in these different patterns. Figure 1 shows the initiatives proposed for each model.

Under the **Servant Leader** model, the leader's motivation to lead arises from an underlying attitude of egalitarianism. In other words, the leader's belief system says he or she is no better than those who are led. All members of the organization have equal rights to vision, respect, and information. The leader's role is to facilitate the emergence of a community within the organization. In our opinion, the leader has a trustee role, one in which individual growth and development are goals in and of themselves.

The key leader drivers, as shown in Figure 1, are valuing people, developing people, building community, displaying authenticity and sharing leadership. Possible impacts of these drivers could be: higher skilled people, more ethical people, better communicators, strong interpersonal relationships, creation of shared visions, and clear goals.

It is argued here that these outcomes in conjunction with the leader initiatives that produce them create the spiritual generative culture. A spiritually generative culture is one in which members are focuses on the personal growth of themselves and others, and the organizational systems that facilitate that growth. It is further suggested that, while this culture is satisfying to organizational members, it results in followers who are passive to the external environment and unlikely to want to upset internal conditions which might require substantive changes in the status quo but is conducive to generating internal personal growth.

The **Transformational Leader** emerges from a different motivation base. Where the servant leader has a sense of egalitarianism, the transformational leader is motivated by a sense of mission to recreate the organization to survive in a challenging external environment. The transformational leader's motivation base has a more macro focus. Individual growth and

development are not unimportant but must be related to the organization's success in the external environment.

Under the transformational leader model, as seen in Figure 1, the main leader initiatives are idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. These initiatives lead to: role modeling, high ethical standards, concern for the needs of others, communication of expectations, shared visions, innovations, risk taking, and questioning of practices and systems.

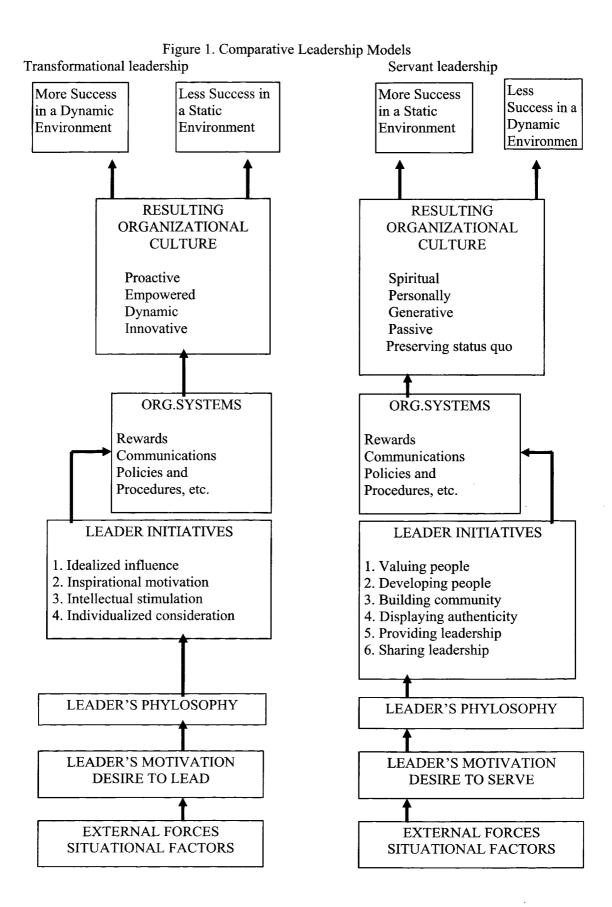
Together with the leader initiatives, this leader approach produces the *empowered dynamic culture*. Organizational members in this type of organization not only have high skills but also have high expectations placed upon them. The leader models high performance. A reading of the descriptions of servant leadership reveals no calls for risk taking and innovation, while this is a key element in a transformed organization.

Clearly some of the outcomes of the transformational model are similar to the spiritual generative culture. For example, the call for high ethical standards and concern for the individual are apparent in both. It could be suggested, however, that in servant leadership one arises from a belief in human dignity as a primary organization goal; while in the transformational organization these virtues are valued because to be successful the organization as a whole depends on a strong "virtuous" foundation.

In Figure 1, both models of leadership are included in a chain of relationships. Contextual forces and/or situational factors would define the leader's motivation in these relationships. stated earlier, applications of the servant leadership concept include not-for-profit and community leadership organizations where the environment can be characterized by low dynamism and slow change processes, relative to many modern business environments that face global competition. In the low dynamism situation, a leader's motivation "to serve first" is effective. The "black box" of an organizational system will interpret the leader's philosophy and resulting initiatives into a culture that we would describe as generative and spiritual. This type of culture works on creation of a harmonized, cooperative internal environment where spiritual awareness and growth represent the core values of an organization. Such a culture is likely to be more passive in introducing changes and more persistent in preserving its status quo. Given the specifics of an appropriate external environment, an organization with servant leadership based culture will succeed.

In the case of transformational leadership, the external environment is usually more dynamic and challenging, thus requiring quick decisions and correct reactions. Here a leader's motivation is to lead first, to get an organization into the shape necessary to adapt effectively to external requirements. Leader initiatives are designed to place strong emphasis on inspiration and intellectual stimulation of every member in organization. It is suggested the resulting organizational culture is the projection of a behavior leader's through organizational communication and reward systems, and is characterized as empowering and innovative, dynamic, and receptive to possible changes.

We would argue that the servant leadership model works better in a more stable external environment evolutionary and serves development purposes, whereas transformational leadership is the model for organizations facing intense external pressure where revolutionary change is a necessity for survival. Here, the importance of the time factor comes into play. Servant leadership stresses collaboration and integrity, where communication and persuasion skills become extremely important. Decisioninvolve making processes most of the organizational members and generally results in consensus. The time factor is not considered crucial, which allows for groups to make mutually acceptable decisions. Transformational leadership, in contrast, gives the leader some initiative in decision making, for example, to take a certain risks or to drop obsolete practices. This, however, does not guarantee that the decision made will be completely accepted by followers, but the charismatic influence and inspirational power of a leader will support the faith in the correctness of a leader's actions. Thus, the time factor is accounted for in the transformational leadership model.



#### **Summary**

In this article, we have critically analyzed the developments in modern leadership theory. We briefly reviewed the concept of transformational and servant leadership. For the purpose of comparison of transformational and servant leadership models, we created a matrix that showed evident overlap between the models as well as their unique characteristics. Despite the overlapping behavioral components, we conclude that theoretical underpinnings and context for application of the models are quite different.

As was suggested in critical analysis, both models have limitations. In our opinion, the major deficiency includes underestimation of the impact of contextual factors. To analyze the models in a broader prospective, we proposed and discussed a comparative model. According to the model, servant leadership will be more effective than transformational leadership in certain contexts. For example, not-for profit, volunteer and religious organizations often operate in a more static environment and attract employees who seek opportunities for personal growth, nurturing, and healing. members of servant organizations may argue against thinking of stakeholders as customers and resist using the traditional "business model" in their decision-making.

Transformational leadership, opinion, is more suitable for a dynamic external environment, where employees are empowered with greater responsibility and encouraged to innovate, take initiative and risk. In this regard we would argue that when an organization in a dynamic environment tries to implement the leadership organizational servant model, members would become frustrated, because the leader's behavior would not be seen as aggressively addressing external forces that may have a significant impact on an organizational This does suggest success. not that organizational members would not appreciate the personalized attention they get, but decreasing organizational performance may result in turnover of high performers, who seek rewards for challenge and success.

On the other side, as was suggested by earlier research, the life cycle of an organization

could account for the effectiveness of varying leadership styles. We would argue that on the birth and initial growth stage of organizational charismatic element cycle the transformational leadership should be most effective. However, when an organization enters the maturity stage, concern for employees and their personal growth, which servant leadership supports, appears to be significant for effective leadership. Finally, on the decline stage, when the organization is required to take a fresh start transformational leadership may again come into play.

In our opinion, servant leadership tends to cultivate a more static approach to the external environment than transformational leadership. The servant leader's motivation is directed more at the personal growth of the follower, thus the servant leader's success is determined by the extent to which the follower moves toward selfactualization (Maslow, 1970). Whereas the transformational leader's motivation is directed toward obtaining success for organization, which will reflect on his/her abilities, and the success of these leaders is measured by the extent to which they obtain organizational rewards.

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