EXPLORING THE WAY SERVANT LEADERS FOSTER EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF SERVANT LEADERS IN NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

A Thesis
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By
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Greg Levi Goleski, candidate for the degree of Master of Human Resource Development, has presented a thesis titled, *Exploring the Way Servant Leaders Foster Employee Development: A Qualitative Study of Servant Leaders in Non-Profit Organizations*, in an oral examination held on November 5, 2012. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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ABSTRACT

The literature on servant leadership in third sector organizations is in dire need of further research for documenting the developmental effects of servant leadership on employees in non-profit organizations (Schneider & George, 2011). The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore how servant leaders in non-profit organizations perceived their role cultivating their employees’ personal and professional development. The population under investigation constituted six Saskatchewan executive directors and managers, who worked for non-profit organizations, had more than 10 years experience in leadership roles, and identified as servant leaders within that timeframe. A modified van Kaam method utilized a servant leadership questionnaire, as well open-ended and semi-structured online and telephone interview questions for collecting data on the lived experiences of the servant leaders (Moustakas, 1994).

The results of this study revealed the participants perceived servant leadership as beneficial to employee development in non-profit organizations, particularly at these times when these organisations have limited training and development budgets. Moreover, servant leaders in non-profit organizations were found to cultivate their employees’ development through the creation of positive learning environments, build community through modelling of collaboration and commitment, and exhibit stewardship by enhancing employees’ growth through effectively managing organizational resources whether internal or external to the organization. The participants noted numerous obstacles to effective servant leadership practices, such as abandoning their servant leadership convictions in moments of organizational crises, being taken seriously by non-practicing servant leaders (such as transactional leaders), and that servant leadership is
not conducive to the cold-hearted aspect of business. The study concludes with some recommendations for best practice, and offers some suggestions for further research.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research has been made possible through the valued efforts and support of many people. First, I would like to thank the six participants, who selflessly spent their time to discuss with me their many experiences as practicing servant leaders in non-profit organizations. Such voluntary participation is reminiscent of the participants’ passion for self-reflection, which is instrumental in servant leadership.

I would like to acknowledge the invaluable direction and advice of Dr. Abu Bockarie. Dr. Bockarie has provided me guidance along this arduous journey to completing my research this past year.

I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Larry Steeves and Dr. Warren Wessel for lending their expertise to my work.
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my partner of eight years, Kathy. Kathy gave me a different perspective on the value of life, friendship, and sobriety.

The work is also dedicated to my grandparents, Fran and Bernie. Your hope in my abilities as a young man kept me alive long enough for me to realize my own abilities, thus shaping the man I am today. Thank you.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Several scholars have proffered that research into servant leadership is still in its development stages. For example, Stone, Russell, and Patterson (2004) suggest that “academic research on servant leadership is still in its infancy” (p. 358). Farling, Stone, and Winston (1999) advance that servant leadership as a concept “has been systematically undefined and lacking in empirical support” (as cited in Stone et al., 2004, 352). In addition, Stone et al. (2004) relate that servant leadership research has focused primarily on comparing servant leadership to other leadership models as well identifying specific traits of servant leadership. The authors contend that rarely has servant leadership research focused on exploring the strategies that servant leaders use to develop their employees.

The review of the literature suggests that limited research on servant leadership in relation to non-profit organizations exists. Ronquillo (2011) believes “the seemingly absent research on servant leadership within non-profit organizations should be of some concern” (p. 347). Further, Schneider and George (2011) suggest, “researchers should continue to explore whether and how servant leaders may help service clubs and other non-profit organizations reach their goals, while they simultaneously meet the needs of their volunteers” (p. 74). Thus, in addition to the limited literature on servant leadership in non-profit organizations, research on the ways servant leadership in non-profit organizations assist employee personal and professional growth appears to be limited.

The definition of servant leadership used in this study is based on that offered by Patterson (2003). In her doctoral dissertation, Patterson defines servant leaders as “leaders who lead an organization by focusing on their followers, such that the followers
are the primary concern and the organizational concerns are peripheral” (p. 5).

Patterson’s definition suggests servant leaders make the needs of employees paramount and thus relegates organizational needs as secondary. She opines that when followers know their needs are being looked after by their servant leader, positive spill-over effects will permeate the organization to augment organizational goals. A more detailed analysis of the differing definitions of servant leadership is presented in Chapter 2.

Dixon (2008) defines a non-profit organization as existing to satisfy a need outside itself “[by] address[ing] something that is lacking in the community or to solve a problem for the world [we] live in” (p. 28). Servant leadership is increasingly employed within non-profit organizations (Cintron & Nichols, 2006). Ronquillo (2011) proposes “the concept of servant leadership seems reasonably relevant to the many organizations that have a human services focus. In fact, many of them embody servant leadership” (p. 347). Ronquillo affirms non-profit organizations with a human services focus tend to be proponents of social responsibility, which “seem to be a logical fit, as Greenleaf (1977) placed heavy emphasis on social responsibility in his original concept of servant leadership” (p. 348). A wide range of professionals working within non-profit enterprises including churches, public schools, and hospitals (Riggio & Orr, 2003) are applying servant leadership.

Sturm (2008) links servant leadership principles with supporting employee personal and professional growth. Schneider and George (2011) indicate, “More research is necessary to examine the long-term differential effects of [servant leadership] on behaviour in both non-profit and for-profit organizations” (p. 74). Stone et al. (2004) suggest that further academic exploration will help researchers understand the extent
leaders create a sustainable advantage and enhance their employees’ long-term productivity through their practice of servant leadership. Furthermore, Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber (2009) suggest future research on servant leadership needs to envelop an employee focus. They relate, “That future research could take a more follower-centric approach in looking at the well-being of followers of servant leaders and the ways in which their well-being affects the ability of the leader and followers to perform” (p. 437). Accordingly, this study explored the perceptions of six servant leaders of non-profit organizations about the ways they fostered the growth and development of their employees.

**Statement of Research Purpose**

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to develop an understanding of the perceived contribution of six servant leaders to the growth and development of their employees. The study seeks to give voice to these leaders within the process of understanding their perceptions of the most prevalent servant leadership characteristics they exhibit in their practice, the challenges they face in their servant leadership practice, as well as the ways they foster the personal and professional development of their employees. The study uses the experiences of these servant leaders as the basis for suggesting best practices to enhance the personal and professional growth and development of their employees.

**Research Questions**

Given the nature of this research, the following questions were developed to guide the research process.
1. How do leaders of non-profit organizations as servant leaders foster the personal and professional development of their employees?

2. What are the most prevalent servant leadership characteristics exhibited by the leaders of the six non-profit organizations?

3. In what ways do the servant leaders in non-profit organizations feel challenged in their servant leadership practice?

4. What suggestions can the servant leaders offer to enhance the personal and professional growth and development of their employees?

The study utilized a qualitative phenomenological methodology. The overarching goals of implementing a qualitative approach here was to explore a central phenomenon and delineate this information into appropriate themes (Moustakas, 1994). The central phenomenon of this study was exploring the perceptions of servant leaders in non-profit organizations about the way they foster their employees’ personal and professional growth and development. Thus, a qualitative phenomenological approach was well suited for this study.

**Significance of the Study**

This study is significant because servant leadership is widely viewed in the literature as a strategy for organizational and employee growth and development. Accordingly, this research contributes to the understanding of the way servant leadership contributes to employee growth and development. Such understanding will be most important for the non-profit organizations observed, as limited research was available that examined the perceived strategies used for enhancing the growth and development of their employees.
This study is a useful contribution to the body of research on servant leadership in non-profit organizations. In addition, the findings of the study and the recommendations that are offered will directly benefit the non-profit organizations where the research is conducted in their attempt to enhance the personal and professional growth and development of their employees. The study is also of interest to servant leaders in other non-profit organizations across the province and elsewhere because it focuses on exploring and understanding the strategies some servant leaders perceive to enhance the personal and professional growth and development of their employees. Furthermore, human resource development and management professionals and practitioners in business and government may benefit from this study, as they oversee some aspect of employee growth and development in the workplace. The government can benefit from the results, because state-sponsored provincially based groups often establish non-governmental organizations to provide support to the advancement of their citizenry, through social programs. The best practices derived from this study’s findings may be applicable to business contexts within voluntary sector organizations. The criteria for best practices used in this study constituted the opinions and theories discussed in the literature reviewed, the findings of similar research studies that explored how servant leaders perceived the ways they developed their employees (e.g., Alcala, 2009, Bohanek, 2007, Brumley, 2007), and how the study participants perceived the ways they fostered the growth and development of their employees.

**Limitations of the Study**

The findings of the study are limited to the views and perceptions of the six servant leaders in non-profit organizations in Saskatchewan. Accordingly, the study
makes no claim to generalizability; however, readers of this study may be able to compare meaningfully the findings to the views of servant leaders who work in similar non-profit organizations. In addition, the study explores the experiences of servant leaders who work in six non-profit organizations. Accordingly, the participant sample is not representative of all the stakeholder groups normally associated with employee growth and development in the six non-profit organizations. Third, data were collected through online and one-on-one telephonic follow-up interviews; there was no direct observation of the activities of these servant leaders to understand the way they actually enhanced employee growth and development in their organizations. Finally, the focus of this study is the role of the six servant leaders in the growth and development of their employees. The study does not focus on their role in volunteer and organizational growth and development or community or societal growth and development.

**Researcher Profile**

Providing a researcher profile is an important prelude to the next two chapters, specifically Chapter 3. The researcher profile is important because it gives the reader insights into my experiential background with the subject matter. Professor Tutlewski from Kwantlen Polytechnic University’s (KPU) School of Business introduced me to servant leadership in 2009 when I took an intensive leadership development course with him at KPU in British Columbia. The course readings and Professor Tutlewski’s instructional style provided a rudimentary understanding of servant leadership. While enrolled in this course, I did my practicum within a major non-profit organization in Surrey, where I observed a leadership style e.g. servant leadership, that was unique to my leadership experience in for-profit organizations.
After my practicum, I established a business that offered low-cost training and development programs to employees and volunteers who worked in non-profit organizations. As a self-employed consultant, I observed that several leaders of non-profit organizations were not providing adequate growth and development opportunities for their employees. At the same time, it was obvious to me these leaders placed considerable emphasis on the professional development of their employees.

Based on my studies at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, my practicum experience, and my work as consultant, I started to ask myself questions relating to servant leadership in non-profit organizations. For example, are servant leaders in non-profit organizations concerned only with the professional growth and development of their employees, or does the training they offer to their employees also focus on their personal growth and development? How widespread is the practice of servant leadership in non-profit organizations, and how many of these organizations are headed by servant leaders? How is the servant leadership approach different from the other leadership approaches? These and similar questions have led to my interest in this study.

I subscribe to the characteristics of servant leadership described by Greenleaf (1977) and Laub (1999). These characteristics include honesty, concern for employees and commitment to their growth and development, stewardship, credibility, community building as well as vision and foresight. In my view, servant leadership is much easier to apply in non-profit organizations than in organizations where management’s primary concern is with the bottom-line.

In Chapter 3, I discuss how I underwent epoché, which included identifying my biases (some noted above) through mindfulness meditation prior to, and after interviews
with the participants. Epoché enabled me to identify any preconceived notions of professional and personal development approaches in non-profit organizations I had, and allowed me to temporarily shelve these notions until later analysis warranted revisiting them.

**Structure of the Thesis**

The remaining chapters of this thesis are organized as follows.

Chapter 2 presents the literature review for the study. It discusses the perspectives on the definitions of servant leadership, characteristics, and theories of servant leadership, servant leaders as coaches and mentors, outcomes of servant leadership practice, and critiques of servant leadership.

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology. It describes the rationale for the research approach, data collection methods, study sample, methods of data collection, data analysis and interpretation procedures, the University of Regina research ethics process, and issues of credibility and transferability of the research results.

Chapter 4 presents the data and findings of the study. The findings are organized around four broad areas, which relate to the participants’ perceptions of the ways they have fostered the personal and professional growth and development of their employees, the key servant leadership characteristics they exhibited, how they felt challenged as servant leaders, and the suggestions they offered to enhance the personal and professional growth and development of their employees.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings of the study in relation to the literature review presented in Chapter 2. It provides some recommendations arising from the study, and concludes with some suggestions for further research.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses the various perspectives on the definition of servant leadership, theories and models of servant leadership, common traits, behaviours and characteristics of servant leaders, critique of servant leadership, servant leaders as coaches and mentors in non-profit organizations, and servant leadership in private and public sector organizations. The review of literature provides a framework for the presentation and discussion of the findings for this study.

Perspectives on the Definition of Servant Leadership

Greenleaf (1977) coined the concept of servant leadership. He describes a servant leader this way:

The servant-leader is servant first…it begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first; perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions…The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. (pp. 13-14)

According to Greenleaf (2005), servant leadership can be defined by the way that one responds to two key questions, which are, “Do others around the servant-leader become wiser, freer, more autonomous, healthier, and better able themselves to become servants? Will the least privileged of the society be benefited or at least not further deprived?” (p. 7). In my view, Greenleaf’s perspective appears to reflect Marxist egalitarianism with a focus on promoting equality and justice. At the same time, Greenleaf’s definition appears to suggest the servant leader should make sacrifices to their own detriment to benefit others.

Patterson (2003) in her doctoral dissertation presents servant leadership as a logical extension of transformational leadership theory. She defines servant leaders as
“those leaders who lead an organization by focusing on their followers, such that the followers are the primary concern and the organizational concerns are peripheral” (p. 5). Thus according to Patterson, servant leaders must consider the varied needs of their employees, and seeking to address those needs should be of primary concern to them.

Tomasko (1993) offers that a servant leader encourages followers to feel as if they do not have to aspire to great lengths to receive their fair share of rewards, resources, and recognition. In other words, employees do not have to spend time thinking of themselves, because they know their leader is thinking about that on their behalf. In my opinion, servant leaders who spend some time to think about their employees’ wellbeing acquire intrinsic rewards through selflessly helping others improve their complex situations.

Adler, Abraham, and Styhre (2004) suggest servant leadership involves flipping the conventional top-down and transactional method of leading to envisioning a paradigm shift when leaders begin placing the needs of others and the organization before their own needs. Thus to Adler et al., servant leadership must replace transactional leadership as the dominant leadership model in the organization’s hierarchy of power. When the entire organization and its leaders practice servant leadership, the employees’ needs will supersede any underlying organizational need. In other words, Adler et al. contend the only organizational need is the one which satisfies employee needs.

Patterson’s (2003) definition posits the importance of servant leaders holding the needs of their employees above their own self-interest. Tomasko’s (1993) definition propounds equality, thoughtfulness, and foresight as critical to servant leadership. Patterson’s definition mirrors Tomasko’s definition in that the servant leaders’ needs are secondary to the needs of their employees. The two definitions differ in that Tomasko’s
definition suggests holding employees’ needs primary to their own needs as an intrinsic quality of the servant leader. Adler et al.’s (2004) definition differs from both Tomasko and Patterson in that it suggests that all leaders within an organization must be practicing servant leaders if employee needs are to supersede organizational needs.

**Traits, Behaviors, and Characteristics of Servant Leaders**

Greenleaf, Beazley, Beggs, & Spears (2003) suggest the 10 most common characteristics of a servant leader are listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. Bohanek’s (2007) phenomenological study looked at eight public school superintendents (kindergarten to grade 8 schooling) as servant leaders and the servant leadership characteristics they exhibited. He coded his interviews based on 15 servant leadership characteristics, which were love, shared power, integrity, serving others, commitment to the growth of people, sense of calling, foresight, stewardship, awareness, healing, empathy, listening, persuasion, conceptualization, and building community. The author found that listening, shared power, building community, and awareness were the most prevalent servant leadership characteristics exhibited by the eight participants.

Brumley (2007) studied principals of Louisiana’s top performing combination schools (K-12), in particular, how combination school principals academically developed in relation to the six characteristics posited by Laub’s (2003) servant leadership organizational model, which are values people, develops people, displays authenticity, building community, provides leadership, and shares leadership. This being said, the author examined how certain servant leadership characteristics were manifested in the
professional practice of these principals. He found the most prevalent servant leadership characteristics were displaying authenticity, building community, and valuing people. In addition, the least prevalent characteristics were sharing leadership and developing people.

In the Table below, Laub (1999) summarizes what the literature from 1970-1999 suggests are the predominant characteristics of servant leadership. Laub’s table depicts the following five characteristics as probably the most cited in the servant leadership literature. The characteristics are stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, credibility, building community as well as conceptualization and foresight. Each of these five characteristics is discussed below.

Table 1 Laub’s (1999) Summary of Servant Leadership Characteristics (pp. 5-7)

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<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
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<tr>
<td>Compassion</td>
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<td>Not coercive</td>
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<td>Shared power</td>
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<td>Release control</td>
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<td>Doesn’t rely on positional authority</td>
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<td>Empowers others</td>
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<td>Enables people</td>
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<td>Shared decision making</td>
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<td>Team</td>
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<td>Collaborative</td>
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<td>Partnership</td>
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<td>“we” vs. “I”</td>
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<td>Leads by example</td>
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<td>Open to being known</td>
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<td>Open, honest, transparent</td>
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<td>Vulnerable</td>
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<td>Integrity, credible</td>
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<td>Admits limitations</td>
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<td>Authentic</td>
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<td>Accountable</td>
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<td>Denies self</td>
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<td>Diversity</td>
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<td>Action oriented</td>
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**Stewardship**

Block (1987) proposed stewardship serves as a requisite for effective servant leadership in any workplace leadership situation. According to Block, stewardship “assumes first-and-foremost a commitment to serving the needs of others” (p. 88). He
defined stewardship as holding something in trust for another. Block posited stewardship as the most cited characteristic of servant leaders. Stewardship is selecting service over self-interest, “Where the simple acts of tending to the needs of the team must be the beginning and the end” (Magill, 2000, p. 241).

**Commitment to the Growth of People**

Servant leaders believe that individuals have an intrinsic value “beyond their tangible contributions as workers” (Greenleaf et al., 2003, p. 19). A servant leader in a non-profit organization is committed to the personal growth of employees within the organization in which they work. Beaver (2008) explored the experiences of five nursing instructors as they are “led by servant leaders [Deans] in two institutions of higher education” (p. vii). One institution was a private, religiously affiliated college and the other a public university. Beaver asked the participants to describe their experiences in relation to how they saw themselves as employees, and the way their leaders influenced them. Her participants mentioned what the servant leaders valued most was their need to learn and grow in their current roles.

Concerning training and development issues for employees, servant leaders take a personal interest in the ideas and suggestions offered by them. They take some of these ideas and suggestions as a guide in developing employee training and development programs. As Wyld (2010) suggests concerning employee training and development, “People must understand that change within any organization first takes place within them, and they must take action to make that change in their work environment” (para. 6). Forrest (2010) conducted an interview with Barrick, CEO of the Heart and Stroke Foundation in the United Kingdom, about how he became a servant leader and the
positive effects his leadership has inspired in his staff’s success. Forrest quotes Barrick as saying, “[servant leadership] is about raising the value and participation of fellowship...everyone is in this together, my achievements are your achievements, your achievements are my achievements, [it has driven within the Heart and Stroke Foundation] an outstanding record of growth and achievement”. Barrick’s comments suggest his philosophy about servant leadership appears to have served his employees and organization well, and provides evidence of how feasible servant leadership can be in a non-profit organization.

A common problem associated with most non-profit organizations is training and developing employees on a miniscule training and development budget (Gislason & Wilson, 2009). Flint (2011) suggested servant leaders insert additional monies into employee training budgets to allow individuals to attend off-site training, such as seminars, to help them augment job skills.

Greenleaf et al. (2003) contend servant leaders foster employee personal and professional growth and development through the creation of a positive learning environment by establishing a positive learning culture, and learning transfer climate. Saks and Haccoun (2007) define a learning culture as “a culture in which members of an organization believe that knowledge and skill acquisition are part of their job responsibilities and that learning is an important part of work life in the organization” (p. 96). The authors describe a training transfer climate as, “the characteristics in the work environment that can either facilitate or inhibit the application of training” (p. 95). Saks and Haccoun suggest the most important element in creating a positive training transfer climate is the supports proffered by peers and supervisors. The authors further suggest
that a positive training transfer climate is a “strong predictor of training effectiveness” (p. 95).

**Servant Leaders as Credible Leaders**

Credible leaders listen and indulge in the goals and dreams of their employees, inadvertently strengthening the leader’s credibility in the eyes of their employees (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Credibility in leadership is fundamental when attempting to inspire others. Several scholars believe as credible leaders, servant leaders will continuously learn themselves, in addition to fostering a learning atmosphere within their organization (Bennis, 1989; Greenleaf, 1977; Senge, 1990). Servant leaders must keep abreast of new advancements in their field, lending to their credibility in the workplace.

Yukl (1998) relates leadership credibility as being cultivated through leaders highlighting their expertise, and staying abreast of new technological developments and trends in their respective field or profession. Servant leaders, as credible leaders, inspire hope and courage within their employees by adhering to their convictions before their peers, facilitate positive thoughts and imagery, provide support to others selflessly, and seek out support from them (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Miles (1997) claims servant leaders can also empower and motivate their employees, and thus enhance their own credibility, by restructuring their work environment in a way that provides supports to workers to be effective in their work, and motivated to improve performance. Similarly, Werhane (2007) believed “servant leaders may be effective in providing keys to empowerment” (p. 85).
Building Community

Laub (1999) described building community as forging strong personal relationships, valuing the differences of others, and “work[ing] collaboratively with others” (p. 144). Greenleaf et al. (2003) postulate servant leaders seek a means to build community among those they work with within an organization. Dye and Garman (2006) propose servant leaders consider themselves members of the team, and work to foster a sense of “We” when working collaboratively, setting goals and working through workplace impediments.

Conceptualization and Foresight

Greenleaf et al. (2003) claim conceptualization encompasses a servant leader’s ability to dream big dreams. A servant leader who examines organizational problems from a conceptualization perspective is able to think “beyond day-to-day realities” (p. 18). Conceptual thinking requires the servant leader to maintain broad-based conceptual thinking, thus requiring the leader to look at things in the long-term. Greenleaf et al. argue servant leaders seek a satisfying equipoise “between conceptual thinking and a day-to-day, focused approach” (p. 18). Foresight is the ability to visualize and identify outcomes despite the difficulty involved in defining them. Greenleaf et al. suggest foresight “enables the servant leader to understand the lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequences of a decision for the future” (p. 18). The authors imply conceptualization and foresight are underexplored in the literature and certainly deserving of more attention. Greenleaf et al. believe that foresight is “closely related to conceptualization” (p. 19). Bohanek (2007) states “foresight is closely related to conceptualization in that conceptualization relates to the big picture and vision;
foresight relates to particular decisions” (p. 65). Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2011) enjoins servant leaders to view the organization holistically and visualize what the organization could become. Steinbeck (2009) and Spears (1998) believed servant leaders should combine foresight and conceptualization in their practice to enable them to “evaluate the lessons of the past” (Spears, p. 38). Both conceptualization and foresight are discussed separately in the ensuing paragraph.

Servant Leaders as Coaches and Mentors

Trompenaars and Voerman (2009) contend, “The best way to let people grow is via coaching and mentoring” (p. 35). Servant leaders offer coaching and mentoring to their employees, attempt to determine their employees’ skills, knowledge and abilities, so they can improve and contribute to the overall good of the organization and its beneficiaries.

Saks and Haccoun (2007) define coaching as, “a training method in which a seasoned employee works closely with another employee to develop insight, motivate, build skills, and to provide support through feedback and reinforcement” (p. 190). Cihak and Howland (2002) conducted a study on leadership within libraries. One conclusion from the study was that library coaches as servant leaders obtained personal fulfillment as they proffered random acts of kindness in the workplace. Cihak and Howland suggest, “Coaches who become servant-leaders gain influence, strengthen relationships, and liberate themselves as they uplift their co-workers” (p. 55).

Greenleaf and Spears (2002) opine, “there is very little sustained performance at the level of excellence–of any kind, anywhere – without continuous coaching” (p. 139). Coaching supports an aspirant to think through existing problems to make something
greater and different happen. Daft and Lane (2008) posit servant leaders “[don’t] have answers; [they] ask questions” (p. 178). Gislason and Wilson (2009) believe that managers should place the most attention on top performers in the workplace. Employees, who provide the most service and most work, should be at the forefront of their group, and they should be rewarded with more of what they need and want. Coaching is employed to assist people excel, grow, and prosper.

Gislason and Wilson (2009) suggest in “many nonprofits we do not have additional positions to offer, yet we do need more leadership” (p. 235). The lacrosse players at the University of Virginia view their coach, Dom Starsia, as a servant leader (Yeager, 2010). Yeager contends that Dom seeks first, to serve his players. He ensures the institution fully addresses or takes care of all their needs to enable them to perform optimally at work, and enjoy doing so. Greenberg (2009) believes servant leaders as coaches provide the most effective school of leadership for “instilling mental toughness” (p. 2). Concerning athletes, Greenberg believes they can be more motivated, self-confident, harder working, and coachable. In addition, he states, “this style of coaching helps athletes better cope with adversity and actually perform better” (p. 1).

As coach, a servant leader keeps his players’ needs, aspirations, and interests ahead of his own in making decisions. Greenberg (2009) continues, “the servant leader [coach] is not a spaghetti spine bending to every whim of his players…instead, he is actually interested in what his players think and feel and consults them, using and integrating their feedback when appropriate” (p. 2). Further, Greenberg believes the results of those who coach using a servant leadership model as opposed to the old school, create “mentally tougher athletes” (p. 2). Greenberg concludes servant leaders, as coaches
are more successful at motivating their employees, who, in turn, enjoy performing their prescribed duties, feel more self-confident in their abilities, and harbour a stronger work ethic. Servant leaders connect with people in their organization to make things happen (Astroth, Goodwin, & Hodnett, 2011).

Concerning mentoring, Saks and Haccoun (2007) define mentoring as “a method in which a senior member of an organization takes a personal interest in the career of a junior employee” (p. 193). In the context of non-profit organizations, a senior employee serves as a servant leader and a junior employee is considered an employee seeking personal and professional development. Johnson (2007) noted effective mentors understand their protégé’s feelings, thoughts, and struggles from the protégé’s point of view. Cohen (2003) suggests mentors demonstrate a desire to serve mentees by exhibiting empathetic listening, and attempting to understand their mentee’s concerns. Mosley and Mosley (2010) suggest that servant leaders must “focus on listening intently and reflectively to others... [And] strive to understand and empathize with others” (p. 247)

Williams (2005) examined the transformative role that structured or formal mentoring relationships have on strengthening the non-profit sector and developing non-profit talent, and concluded that manifold reasons for non-profit organizations to make mentoring arrangements in their workplace a priority today exist. Williams concludes, “The primary objective of a workplace mentoring program is to develop the capacity of employees to serve a cause or a community well” (p. 3).

Williams (2005) contends that mentoring partnerships provide numerous integral benefits to non-profit organizations and their staff. First, they stimulate learning and
expand the overall competency foundation of all staff involved in the mentoring relationships. In addition, mentorship offers partnership opportunities for succession planning and knowledge transfer from senior executives to their successors, especially at a time when baby boomers are expected to exit non-profit organizations for retirement. Further, the author suggests that for continual growth in the non-profit sector to occur, organizations must retain creative, innovative staff, since the remuneration they provide for work performed is often low. Williams also points to the “the need for staff, particularly in small nonprofits, to develop a broad range of competencies, the capacity to wear multiple hats or to be a jack-of-all-trades” (p. 3). Zachary (2002) argues that mentoring relationships help to protect non-profit organizations from “unforeseen liabilities” as mentors challenge mentees to look and assess workplace risks differently, and effectively manage organizational challenges.

Williams (2005) offers some examples of mentees’ testimonies about the way they perceived their servant leader and mentor’s influence on them. Barry Joseph explained that he and his mentor “met regularly to evaluate any challenges to my work and to review my plans for moving forward to make sure I was on track” (p. 7). Similarly, Alicia Conteras, another mentee, remarked, “I enjoyed our relationship because it was a great cross-cultural and cross-generational experience” (p. 3). Doua Thor, also noted, “I would not be here today without conscientious mentors. My mentor has not only given me tools and taught me skills, but she has become a lifelong partner and friend to work in social justice” (p. 2). Further, as Loulena Miles recounted, “my mentor always incorporated me into important aspects of decision-making in preparation for me to one day become an executive director...she pushed me out of the tree, fully
expecting me to fly, and her confidence in me kindled my own” (p. 4). Finally, Clementine Msengi indicated, “One of my mentors taught me step by step how to write a grant proposal...and the program I developed was funded” (p. 6).

**Theories Informing Servant Leadership**

Polleys (2002) asks whether it is conceivable that a theory of servant leadership exists. He shares Spears (1998) concern, who warns against academic attempts to describe servant leadership as a fixed set of requirements. Spears further suggests academics reject any more narrowing of the requirements for servant leadership beyond those Greenleaf (1977) provides. Polleys (2002) argues developing a theory of servant leadership is implausible, as Greenleaf’s servant leadership model serves as the spectrum for leadership in the future. Polleys states, “Servant leadership cuts across theories and provides a foundational philosophy for the theories that emphasize principles congruent with human growth” (p. 126). She continues, “In addition to similarities to the trait theories, servant leadership is similar to behavioral theories in that the leader’s behavior is of critical importance” (p. 126). Polleys makes clear that trait theory and behavioral theory have been instrumental in laying the theoretical foundations for servant leadership. A brief outline of both theories is below.

Research into trait theory can be traced as far back as 1910. The trait theory of leadership “ascribes certain personality traits or attributes exclusively to leaders” (Wren, 1995, p. 311). Early researchers sought to ascertain the personal characteristics and physical traits leaders’ exhibit that set them apart from their employees or followers. The concept of personality appeals to trait theorists, who seek to explain why some persons are better able than others to exercise leadership. Thus, a leader is an individual who
possesses desirable characterological and personality traits, such as honesty, assertiveness, self-confidence, and trustworthiness. In short, trait theorists, especially the early theorists, central argument is that leaders are born, not made.

However, Helm (2008) suggests that after thirty years of study, no patterns exist in the physical or inherited traits of leaders to set them apart from their employees. The author concludes, “Different leadership situations called for different leadership traits” (p. 2), including the characteristics of followers or employees and the leadership context. This key criticism of trait theory led to the rise of the behavioural theory of leadership.

Behavioural theory emerged in the beginning in the 1950s (Helm, 2008) in response to the criticism of trait theory. Behavioural theorists believed they could identify ideal leadership behaviours, and then inculcate potential leaders with these behaviours. Helm (2008) relates, “Behavioural theories, like trait theories, place importance on the characteristics and abilities of the leader” (p. 3). However, Helm states one notable difference between the trait and behavioural theory is that behaviour theory consists of the follower. Trait theorists tend to see leadership as a one-way effect; in other words, they fail to acknowledge the extent to which leaders and followers or employees have interactive effects by determining which traits of followers or employees are of consequence in the leadership situation. Further, behavioural theorists argue that rather than being endowed on individuals by virtue of birth, leadership skills may be acquired. Servant leaders draw on aspects or elements of trait and behavioural theories of leadership depending on the leadership situation.
The Outcomes of Servant Leadership Practices

This section discusses the outcomes of servant leadership on employees, volunteers, non-profit organizations, communities where the organizations operate, and the servant leaders themselves. The section starts with a discussion of the outcomes of servant leadership on employees.

Servant Leadership and Employee Outcomes

Schneider and George (2011) propose a servant leader in a non-profit organization, “Accepts a moral responsibility to serve all stakeholders, especially subordinates” (p. 70). They suggest servant leaders enlighten employees about the need to serve and listen to others. If employees do not possess these core qualities, none of the expected developmental results can be actualized. Servant leaders equip employees with the necessary skill sets to emulate servant leadership throughout the non-profit organization. Trompenaars and Voerman (2009) suggest the “investment will produce a hundred-fold return, if you take good care of your employees, they will in turn take good care of the clients” (p. 34). Cintron and Nichols (2006) suggest servant leaders serve employees to bolster their self-worth and dignity. The literature identifies two key outcomes of servant leadership practices on employees who work in non-profit organizations, and the outcomes relate to increased job satisfaction (Kong, 2008; Anderson, 2005), and growth of employees (Taylor, 2002). In his dissertation, Kong (2008) examined the servant leadership practices of some Pastors within Texas Baptist Convention churches, and the way their practices affected ministerial staffs’ job satisfaction. Kong concluded that in return for such practices by the Pastor, the church staff showed greater job satisfaction in their respective ministries. In addition, Kong’s
findings revealed the church Pastors themselves attributed the increased job satisfaction among the staff to their servant leadership practices. Further, Anderson’s (2005) study explored the extent to which employee job satisfaction was connected to servant leadership in the Church Educational System of the Church of Latter-day Saints.

Anderson concluded a significant correlation exists between servant leaders within non-profit organizations and employee job satisfaction. Anderson believed that “promoting servant leadership on a global scale will allow a greater number of leaders to realize the benefits of using servant leadership in…building a cadre of employees who are increasingly satisfied with their careers” (p. 106). The studies by Anderson (2005) and Kong (2008) appear identical in the sense that both researchers found strong correlations between the practices of their research population and increased employee job satisfaction among the groups. Servant leaders are more successful at motivating their employees to enjoy the performance of their prescribed duties more, feel more self-confident in their abilities, and harbour a stronger work ethic (Greenberg, 2009). As for research on servant leadership in the private sector, Avolio, Walumbwa, and Weber’s (2009) study concluded, “the limited empirical research on servant leadership has shown that it is positively related to follower satisfaction [in the private sector], their job satisfaction, intrinsic work satisfaction, caring for the safety of others, and organizational commitment” (p. 447). Servant leaders establish service standards in accordance with their own management style and behaviour. Further, servant leadership may positively affect frontline employees’ organizational commitment and job satisfaction, because of its role in forging an environment “conducive to delivering high quality service and
Concerning the effect of servant leadership on employees’ growth and development, the servant leader empowers employees in non-profit organizations to grow and succeed, both personally and professionally (Erhart, 2004; Farling et al., 1999; Russell & Stone, 2002). One primary concern of servant leadership is the growth and development of employees. Employees become more empowered when they recognize the leader’s genuine interest in their development, which may result in marked improvement in their commitment to the organization. Taylor (2002) opines an integral idiosyncrasy of servant leadership is the belief that people have intrinsic value far beyond their tangible contributions as employees. This belief drives servant leaders to channel a deep commitment to the growth of each or every employee within their organization. Taylor continues, “This commitment consists of a tremendous responsibility to do everything within the leader’s power to nurture both the professional and the personal growth of his or her employees” (p. 53).

Further, Taylor-Gillham (1998) claims that commitment to employees’ growth takes shape by first, making available organizational financing to be allotted to their personal and professional development, and second, by largely taking a personal stake in the suggestions and ideas that come from them. De Pree (1989) suggests that ideal servant leaders support their employees in fulfilling their highest potential. Regarding an employee’s personal growth, Taylor (2002) expounds, “The ultimate goal of this growth being able to enable people to grow into leaders who will be willing and able to serve” (p. 53). Hennessy, Killian, and Robins (1995) advocate an alternative option for cultivating
employee growth, which involves helping them in maximizing their self-sufficiency and inherent innovations to appease all stakeholders in the organization. Contributing to the growth of employees is integral for an organizations’ success. As Kelley (1999) notes, “followers actually contribute about 90 percent to the success of any organizational outcomes, while leaders account for 10 percent” (p. 10).

Astroth et al. (2011) propose, “the litmus test of a servant leader is whether those served grow, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servant leaders” (p. 3). The authors note servant leaders express pride in seeing others develop and blossom, and do not attempt to hoard the best experiences for themselves. Servant leaders unleash their employees’ inner intelligence. Keith (2008) states, “it doesn’t make any sense to have lots of people in an organization, but let only a few people, those at the top, use their full potential” (p. 51).

Rahimaghae, Nayeri, and Mohammadi’s (2010) study of twenty clinical nurses found that their manager’s role and leadership style effectively influenced the nurses. The authors believed by increasing job satisfaction, improving professional competencies, and increasing professional commitment in the clinic made for positive change. The nurses suggested the “managers, through supporting, encouraging, appreciating, and valuing staff, as well as by creating opportunities for learning, played a facilitating role in their professional growth” (p. 473). In contrast, when the managers did not provide feedback or support, the nurses became discouraged and did not develop professionally. Similarly, a study by Neill and Saunders (2008) explored how nurses viewed their managers’ (hospital administrators) practice of servant leadership. The nurses thought their managers greatly influenced their professional and personal growth by fostering and
facilitating supportive relationships in the workplace. Neill and Saunders found that supportive relationships helped to solidify connections between the servant leaders and employees. Perry (2009) similarly believed servant leaders created sustainable long-term relationships with employees to help them actualize their goals, and assist them in reaching their fullest potential.

The studies by Rahimaghaee et al. (2010) as well as Neil and Saunders (2008) appear similar in the sense that they found strong correlations between the servant leaders’ practice of servant leadership and the growth and development of their employees. In both studies, the researchers concluded the building of lasting and supportive relationships by servant leaders was instrumental in fostering the growth and development of their employees.

**Servant Leadership and Volunteers**

As the relationship between non-profit organizations and their volunteers is not customary to the conventional exchange of compensation for performance, these organizations should make increased efforts to encourage their unpaid workers (Spears, 1998). Considering that volunteers find intrinsic reward in their activities, they need to believe the organization values their contribution to its work (Wisner, Stringfellow, Youngdahal, & Parker, 2005). Wisner et al. suggest servant leaders involve themselves in the personal circumstances of volunteers, which results in attracting their loyalty to the organization.

In their study of eight clubs of an American voluntary service organization, Schneider and George (2011) explored the effectiveness of servant leadership on club member commitment to continued participation in the activities of the clubs. The
Researchers concluded that volunteers who worked with a servant leader felt empowered within their respective clubs. Moreover, Schneider and George advanced, “Servant leaders who provided their volunteers with positive, meaningful experiences may be able to maintain their interest in their volunteer positions” (p. 75). In addition, Schneider and George proposed that servant leadership is “related to high levels of satisfaction in club members…perhaps servant leaders provide the support and guidance necessary for volunteers to be more satisfied with the leader and thus the organization” (p. 71). In spite of these findings however, researchers like Martinez and McMullin (2004) suggest more research that explores the outcomes of servant leadership on volunteers who work in non-profit organizations may be required.

**Servant Leadership, Non-profit Organizations, and the Community**

Cintron and Nichols (2006) advocate, “Non-profit leaders must make great stewards of their organization and the surrounding public’s trust” (p. 3). Society expects the servant leaders to do what is right for not only their organizations but for the community in which the organizations operates. Servant leaders must be mindful of the perceptions the community holds about their organization as well as the contribution of the organizations to the community. A good example of a non-profit organization that contributes to the enrichment of communities is *Habitat for Humanity International*. Habitat for Humanity International is devoted to building simple and affordable housing for impoverished individuals in the community. Based on his interview with Fuller, the Founder and President of Habitat for Humanity International, Zinkosky (2005) indicates Fuller displays humility and care through his vision to build affordable housing for people in derelict positions in the community. Zinkosky notes that Fuller has actualized
his vision by establishing a worldwide movement that has since seen exponential growth in support. He attributes to Fuller the ability to empower community leaders to share in his vision of eradicating substandard housing in the community. Cintron and Nichols (2006) believe Fuller’s “Christian mannered stewardship of the organization would be the most noted trait of his servant leadership” (p. 4).

Servant Leadership and the Non-profit Organization

One of the servant leader’s primary responsibilities is to the relationships garnered with employees, and most often, these relationships can be more valuable than the organization’s purpose or product (Lubin, 2001). Lubin suggests servant leaders trust their employees to pursue the actions necessary to advance the organization’s best interests, even when the leader may not view some of those actions as the most important. The desire by servant leaders to serve their employees first is more important than their need to serve organizational objectives. As Stone et al. (2004) relate, “Servant leadership is a belief that organizational goals will be achieved on a long-term basis only by first facilitating the growth, development, and general well-being of the individuals who comprise the organization” (p. 355). Harvey (2001) outlines three primary concerns of servant leaders in non-profit organizations in the order of their importance, namely employee growth and development, the organization’s customer base, and the organization’s bottom-line. Braham (1999) argues that when an employee can identify their leader as truly adhering to servant leadership ideals, that employee will in turn, become a servant leader, which can notably decrease “customer churn and increase long-term profitability and success” of the organization (p. 19).
**Servant Leadership Outcomes on Servant Leaders**

In servant-led organizations, leaders can acquire the requisite experience to continue growing professionally (Astroth et al. 2011). For instance, when a servant leader participates in mentoring and coaching activities he or she can experience profound growth and development. According to Williams (2005), mentoring can benefit both parties as they “can learn and contribute to the quality of each other’s life and work through a caring, respectful relationship” (p. 2). In one instance, a servant leader mentor confided in Williams saying, “My mentee challenged me to do better—to work with more intention, to be articulate about my ideas, to walk my talk, and to remember that the relationships we build through our work are the core of what our organization’s work is all about” (p. 12). Cihak and Howland (2002) conducted a study on servant leadership within libraries. One of the conclusions of that study was library coaches as servant leaders obtained personal fulfillment as they proffered random acts of kindness and service in the workplace. Cihak and Howland continued, “Coaches who become servant leaders gain influence, strengthen relationships, and liberate themselves as they uplift their co-workers” (p. 55).

**Critique of Servant Leadership**

In spite of the merits of servant leadership discussed in this chapter, the concept has its critics and skeptics. Whetstone (2002) questions the feasibility and applicability of servant leadership practice, suggesting the concept may be too good to be true. Further, critics indicate servant leadership continues to be too difficult to apply to practice (Rauch, 2007; Whetstone, 2002). Whetstone asks, “Is servant leadership unrealistically optimistic, ‘too good to be true’?” (p. 390). Whetstone suggests this is a “question for empirical
analysis, best answered by observing leaders genuinely adopting servant leadership” (p. 390). Other critics suggest servant leadership may be too idealistic, and that American corporations are unlikely to embrace a leadership approach purporting the primary purpose or service is not to product or service development, but to the development of employees and other stakeholders (Berry & Cartwright, 2000). Critics further speculate that servant leadership is inappropriate for Western conglomerates Neuschel (2005) and Quay (1997) argue that servant leadership is unorthodox and too unrealistic.

Patterson’s (2003) definition of a servant leader, which is adopted in this study, raises a key question that relates to whether servant leadership may be “too difficult to apply to practice….too good to be true”. To reiterate, Patterson (2003) defines servant leaders as: “those leaders who lead an organization by focusing on their followers, such that the followers are the primary concern and the organizational concerns are peripheral” (p. 5). However, other authors, like Whetstone and Rauch, suggest relegating organization needs as secondary to employee needs is idealistic and is not typical of today’s workplaces.

Some authors question whether organizations would cease to function optimally (Neuschel, 2005; Quay, 1997) if ‘ideal’ servant leadership were practiced and ultimately implemented, making the achievement of organizational goals peripheral. Nayab (2011) suggests that favoring individual goals over organizational goals and values in servant leadership subsequently leads to “organizational goals remaining unfulfilled owing to employees not giving the attention, priority or urgency such goals deserve” (para. 14). Such concerns were captured in Wong and Page’s (2003) research on self-identified servant leaders. Wong and Page contend that self-identified servant leaders often struggle
to strike a balance between maintaining their whole-hearted servant leadership identity, and organizational survival. The authors discuss case studies about practicing servant leaders who state that control over employees, as opposed to shared control with employees is necessary for organizational survival.

A President of a large Christian organization noted adopting servant leadership as a core value of his organization, “yet he insists that SL [servant leadership] does not apply to him or his senior management” (p. 5). He reasoned if he does not “maintain power and control over his subordinates” his organization would go “astray” and that “when there is no strict control, there would be chaos” (p. 5). Wong and Page also spoke with numerous senior pastors who claimed to endorse servant leadership, but admitted keeping “complete control over every aspect of the operation of the church, to ensure that nothing goes wrong” (p. 5). Wong and Page’s study indicate that the “giving up power” is a paradox for practicing servant leaders, as they feel giving up too much power can result in organizational anarchy per se. This paradox of “giving up power” appears to be one aspect of servant leadership that can be perceived as too idealistic as Wong and Page’s work shows.

Wells (2004) believes servant leadership is in conflict with basic human nature. He postulates that humans lack the ability to remain stalwarts in service to others, because humans are inherently conflicted with sin and are self-serving egocentrics. Rauch (2007) suspects Well’s criticisms of servant leadership could have been based mostly in a specific religious orientation. In her (2005) study, Anderson proposed the principles enveloped in servant leadership theory naturally appealed to people of faith.

According to Herbert (2005), the literature on servant leadership lacks sufficient
exploration. Herbert argues that since Greenfield developed much of the servant leadership literature in the seventies, current literature appears to be simply a reiteration of his work, except that material is presented in a different way. Rauch (2007) expands further on Herbert’s critique. Rauch suggests with the passing of Greenleaf in 1990, the development of servant leadership in the literature was “passed to his contemporaries and the call for empirical research [has] increased” (p. 41). Rauch claimed Greenleaf left much of his work unpublished and in short-essay form. In recognition of this fact, Rauch does conclude that “despite the growing recognition of servant-leadership and a marked increased in research efforts, the theory lacks widespread empirical examinations” (p. 45).

Servant leadership is often portrayed as an unfounded and incomplete theory that is grounded in insufficient research, and what Rauch refers to as the “uncertain definition of the key components” (p. 41). Rauch continues that servant leadership theory tends to suffer from an “identify crisis, and this has been problematic in the development of this theory” (p. 41). Furthermore, Herbert suggests much of the debate in the servant leadership literature is not grounded in Greenleaf’s work. Rather, the debate derives from a much narrow focus on the applicability of servant leadership in a “biblical and religious context of service” (p. 13). Hunter (2004) reviewed the servant leadership literature, and found the majority of the works on servant leadership are directed “towards religious audiences” (p. 21).

Hunter (2004) traveled across the United States of America speaking with managers and servant leaders from various organizations. Hunter indicates those who identify with transformational or transactional leadership believe servant leadership is
“warm and fuzzy, a passive style of leadership” (p. 13). Alcala’s (2009) Texas-based study explored the lived experiences of secondary school principals and their practice of servant leadership. She found the principals perceived themselves as valuing others, growing professionally, displaying integrity, and being service providers. However, the researcher listed the challenges her participants noted to their practice including, encouraging and energizing others, focusing on priorities and goals of the organization, as well as providing necessary leadership and direction. These challenges may point to the difficulties involved in applying servant leadership to practice. Her participants recommended improving their servant leadership practice might involve, “surround[ing] themselves with quality personnel to assist them in their endeavour to educate students as well” (p. iii). Moreover, Wong and Page (2003) proffer a reason how servant leadership could fall flat is when being applied to organizations with a hierarchical structure, which they claim can only work if changed to a participatory and horizontal structure to accommodate servant leadership.

Ebener (2010) found servant leadership could be interpreted as being too soft on employees during moments warranting discipline. Similarly, Prosser (2007) remarked servant leaders are conflicted when dealing with problematic employees thus warranting their dismissal or termination. However, Autry (2004) stated “[servant leaders] can fire people with compassion, sensitivity, and understanding” (p. 110). Ferch and Spears (2011) propounded servant leaders make themselves vulnerable, subsequently inviting people to walk all over them.

Servant leaders possess power, which they can use to manipulate and corrupt their employees (Cialdini, 2001). As servant leadership is a source of motivation and
influence, it could carry with it the distinct possibility for manipulation. Servant leaders inherently rely upon service to others, which may indenture the employees to the leader in a reciprocal relationship. Cialdini (2001) views reciprocation as a cunning way to influence others. When you do something for another individual, that individual may be psychologically obliged to return the favor, whether it be less or greater. Servant leaders are expected to keep the best interests of their employees in mind, “therefore they should develop a positive form of reciprocation whereby they encourage followers to respond not by serving the leader but by serving others” (Stone et al., 2004, p. 350). Further, some individuals seeking to become servant leaders may lack servant leader motives, and can take advantage of others by arguing that they must return an act of service.

Kezar (1998) recalls an experimental study conducted at Equivocal Community College (ECC), and how ECC adopted a servant leadership model. Kezar noted that ECC employees found it difficult to interact within work teams, and expressed their wish to contribute to team successes through verbal or written means. Kezar found that several employees were uncomfortable with everyone speaking freely at meetings, and some hogging the spotlight.

Summary

This chapter has presented the literature review for the study. It discussed the perspectives on the definitions of servant leadership, characteristics, and theories of servant leadership, servant leaders as coaches and mentors, outcomes of servant leadership practice, and critique of servant leadership.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to develop an understanding of the perceived contribution of six servant leaders to the growth and development of their employees. The study seeks to give voice to these leaders within the process of understanding the most prevalent servant leadership characteristics they exhibit in their practice, the challenges they face in their servant leadership practice, as well as their perceptions of the ways they have fostered the personal and professional growth and development of their employees. The study uses the experiences and views of these servant leaders as the basis for suggesting best practices to enhance the personal and professional growth and development of their employees.

This chapter describes the research methodology employed for the study. It presents the research approach and methodology, study sample and brief background of the six participants, data collection methods, data analysis and interpretation procedures, as well as issues of credibility and transferability.

Research Approach

A qualitative research approach is used in this study. Creswell (2007) indicated that some features of a qualitative research approach that make it different from a quantitative research approach. First, the research topics are usually “emotion laden, close to the people and practical” (p. 18). Second, the research questions are generally open-ended so that the participants’ perspectives are fully explored. As the research process proceeds, the research questions may change to reflect an increased understanding of the problem or the issue. Third, a qualitative study typically collects data from multiple sources and the types of data are interviews, observations, and
documents. Fourth, the data presented are based on the participants’ views and the researcher’s own interpretation of those views. The research data can not fully escape the researcher’s personal stamp. Fifth, the whole process of conducting the research and the participants’ ideas are finally shaped in a narrative story that will be presented. Several of these features apply to my study.

Creswell (2007) lists some reasons why researchers conduct a qualitative inquiry. The reasons include, (i) the nature of the research question is to describe what is going on, (ii) individuals must be studied in their “natural setting”, otherwise the findings will be contrived out of context, (iii) the researcher is willing, and able to spend extensive time in the field, and collect data from different resources, and (iv) instead of acting as an “expert” who passes judgment on the participants, the researcher sees him or herself as an active learner, who can tell the story from the participants’ point of view.

To repeat, the focus in qualitative research is on conducting studies in natural settings by using verbal descriptions. Creswell (2007) suggests qualitative research aims to produce an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon from the perspectives of the participants. Thus, the purpose of this study, and nature of the research questions determined that a qualitative research approach is more appropriate. Instead of identifying the relationship between variables, my study seeks to develop an understanding of the perceived contribution of six servant leaders to the growth and development of their employees. The qualitative approach will produce a descriptive account of the servant leadership experiences of the six participants who work for non-profit organizations in this study.
Research Methodology

A qualitative phenomenological research methodology is used in this study. Phenomenology “refers to the lived experiences that belong to a single person” (Giorgi, 1997, p. 236). Russell and Stone (2002) suggest the qualitative phenomenological approach is appropriate for exploring studies of servant leadership attributes such as influence, credibility, service, and empowerment. These attributes and several others are especially useful to consider in this study as they complement employee growth and development (Russell & Stone, 2002). Phenomenology involves researchers studying everyday human experience with microscopic attention to every detail (DeMarrais & Lapan, 2004). Gubrium and Holstein (2003) suggest, “The relation between perception and its objects is not passive. Rather, human consciousness actively constitutes objects of experience” (p. 216). The use of phenomenology has enabled me to address my research and interview questions more clearly. The phenomenological perspective is primarily concerned with constructing meanings through lived experiences. My concern in this study is with understanding the six leaders’ experiences and perceptions of their servant leadership practices, and phenomenology provides me with the means to do so.

Study Participants

Merriam (2009) recommends the use of non-probability sampling methods in qualitative research. She relates the most common form of non-probability sampling is purposive sampling, which she defines as “based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 77). As Merriam recommends, I determined a set criteria to use in selecting my sample before beginning purposive sampling. I recruited
six executive directors and managers from six Saskatchewan based non-profit organizations for this study. A survey conducted by the HR Council for the Nonprofit Sector (2008) on the demographics of 100 employees of non-profit organizations in Canada concluded that roughly 75 percent of them were women. I gave due consideration to the findings of the HR Council survey, and decided to recruit four women and two men for my study. All six executive directors and managers must have accumulated at least ten years work experience within a non-profit organization, and occupied leadership positions in their organizations. In addition, the participants must have self-identified as practicing servant leaders for the last five years.

After obtaining ethics approval of my study from the University of Regina’s Research Ethics Board (see Appendix F), I employed two sampling methods, snowball sampling and convenience sampling, to recruit the six participants. The snowball sampling “is the most common form of purposeful sampling” (Merriam, 2009, p. 79). I began by sending out a servant leadership questionnaire (see Appendix A) to executive directors and managers of several non-profit organizations. The criterion for identifying as a servant leader was to score at least a seven out of ten on the servant leadership questionnaire. The first three executive directors, who self-identified as servant leaders and returned their questionnaire to me, referred me to others who self-identified as servant leaders. Thus, from my initial discussions with them, the sample unexpectedly snowballed into twelve potential participants. I then used convenience sampling to recruit my six participants from the pool of twelve willing participants.

When the participants agreed to participate in the study, I provided them with Letters of Invitation (Appendix E), Consent Forms (Appendix D) and a copy of the
guiding interview questions (Appendix B). The invitation letter explained the purpose of the study, the participant recruitment process, and how the findings of the study would be used. Further, the letter assured the six participants that the identities of those who opted for anonymity would be kept completely confidential using assigned pseudonyms. The consent form informed the participants they could withdraw their participation from the study at any time without consequences. Furthermore, the participants were informed that if they had any questions or concerns about their treatment throughout this process, they should contact the University of Regina’s Research Ethics Board Chair at the University of Regina.

A brief introduction and description of each of the six participants, two of whom requested anonymity is provided below.

- Trish St. Onge is executive director of Catholic Family Services Saskatoon (CFSS), and has been working for CFSS for over twelve years. Trish, falls within the 40-50-year-old age bracket, and has spent the past nine years working in a leadership role in the organization. Moreover, she has self-identified as a practicing servant leader for nine years, starting with her leadership appointment. CFSS provides relevant and insightful counselling to the community as well as professional development, education, and community programs for individuals in need of them. Trish holds two post-secondary education degrees, which are a Bachelor of Social Work and a Masters degree in Continuing Education.

- Christine Epp is the manager of Volunteer Saskatoon and United Way Saskatoon and surrounding area. Christine falls within the 40-50-year-old age bracket. She has over twenty-two years work experience in leadership positions in a non-profit
leadership position, and has worked for other organizations such as the MS Society of Canada. Christine has spent eighteen of her years with Volunteer Saskatoon and United Way Saskatoon in a variety of leadership roles. She holds a Bachelors degree in Arts, and she has taken continuing education classes throughout her adult life. Christine has self-identified as a servant leader for the past ten to twelve years.

- Neil Affleck (a pseudonym) has been an executive director of a Saskatchewan non-profit organization for over ten years. His first leadership experience began in the mid-1990s, which was the same time he began to identify himself as a servant leader. Neil, who falls within the 40-50-year-old age bracket, has worked for a community-based non-profit organization that strives for easier access and better community programs for those living with disabilities. Neil holds three post-secondary credentials at present, two Bachelor’s degrees and a Masters Degree.

- Daria Skibbington-Roeffel holds a management position with the Canadian Administrators of Volunteer Resources. Daria falls within the 30-40-year-old age bracket, and has been working for numerous non-profit organizations since early 2000 in various roles. She self-identified as a servant leader in 2003. Unlike the other participants, Daria has only a high school diploma. The Airdrie and District Victims Assistance Society (ADVDS) recently commended her on her numerous years working within the voluntary sector, and awarded her the Golden Heart.

- Joanne Grant is the chief executive officer of the United Way in Regina, and has been working for the non-profit sector for 18 years. Joanne falls between the 50-60-year-old age bracket, holds an undergraduate degree in business, and has
recently obtained her CMA designation. Her first leadership experience was in 1986, and she has been a practicing servant leader since 1988. Joanne has been employed with the United Way since 1998, beginning her duties as the Director of Operations for the organization.

David Wallace (a pseudonym) has been the executive director at a non-profit organization within one of Saskatchewan’s major cities. The organization works with youths in the community. David falls within the 50-60-year-old age bracket, and has been the active executive director of the organization for about twenty years. David self-identified as a servant leader in the last ten years. David perceives his servant leadership practice continuously evolving, and becoming more refined as he continues to practice it. David holds a Bachelors Degree in Arts.

Data Collection Methods

The data collection methods for this study involved the administration of a servant leadership questionnaire as well as open-ended and semi-structured interviews (online & telephone) conducted with the six participants. The interview questions were sent electronically to the participants to familiarize them with the direction of the study, and give them an opportunity to think through each question before the one-on-one telephone interviews took place. I conducted the telephone interviews two to three weeks after the online interviews, and tape-recorded those interviews with the permission of the participants.
As Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000) suggest, researchers must take certain issues into consideration when conducting interviews. Some issues that are most applicable to this particular study are:

- the objectives of the interview; …whether the interviewer is dealing in facts, opinions or attitudes; whether specificity or depth is sought; …the extent of the interviewer’s own insight into the respondent’s situation; [and] the kind of relationship the interviewer can expect to develop with the respondent. (p. 274)

My key interest in this study was to document the participants’ opinions, perceptions, and thoughts about their servant leadership practice, especially their perceptions of the ways they fostered the growth and development of their employees. Further, I explored the participants’ perceptions of the key servant leadership characteristics they exhibited, the challenges they faced in their servant leadership practice, and the suggestions they offered to enhance their servant leadership practices to foster the growth and development of their employees.

Cohen et al. (2000) discuss trustworthiness in interviews, stating that “interviewers and interviewees alike bring their own, often unconscious experiential and biographical baggage with them into the interview situation” (p. 121). The authors suggest that it is impossible to completely eliminate researcher bias in a qualitative study due to the interactive nature of interviews. As well, Silverman (2004) promotes the use of open-ended interviews so that participants may “demonstrate their unique way of looking at the world” (p. 121).

According to Cassell and Symon (2004), phenomenological interviews can assist in creating a structure “for content analysis to promote generalization of the findings” (p. 21). Hoepfl (1997) relates that phenomenological inquiry uses a naturalistic approach that assists the researcher in understanding the observed phenomena in its context specific
setting. In addition, Hebert’s (2006) study of servant leadership and organizational performance concluded that semi-structured interviews are a reliable data collection method for validating results in organizational contexts. As well, MCG (2010) suggests using semi-structured questions during the interviews “provides the most appropriate instrument [for] understanding [of] the central phenomenon because most of the emphasis is on the role of the researcher to elicit and represent an interpretive relationship of the world” (p. 14). All these issues were relevant to this study.

I transcribed all the interviews to ensure that I captured the accuracy of the participants’ responses and experiences. The telephone interviews gave me further clarification from participants in instances when their responses to the online interviews were unclear (see Appendix C).

Telephone interviews employed in qualitative research have some advantages and disadvantages. The advantages include time reductions in data collection, participants are easier to connect with, and such interviews are known for their ease of replicating the research. The disadvantages occur because the researcher and the participant do not get the face-to-face contact, which is usually good for establishing rapport, and gaining from the non-verbal queues of the participants (Merriam, 2009).

**Data Analysis and Interpretation Procedures**

Leedy and Ormrod (2001) suggest that in phenomenological endeavors data are analyzed throughout the entire data collection process. Beginning data analysis early enabled me to identify emerging patterns and kept the ensuing interviews focused as described by Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2006). Moreover, Deutsch (2010) suggests, “the purpose of a phenomenological data analysis is to understand the meaning of the
participants’ lived experiences of the phenomenon” (p. 67). MCG (2010) offers that “phenomenology provides an appropriate strategy for qualitative inquiry by positioning the researcher within the study to collect data on participant meaning, focusing upon a phenomenon, and bringing personal value to the study” (p. 3).

The Moustaka (1994) modified van Kaam (1966) method for phenomenological analysis of data guided this study. Van Kaam (1966) originally provided the basis for the application of empirical phenomenology in clinical psychology research. Tatro (2010) states this phenomenological data analysis method, “is a systematic and inductive process that progressively narrows a large amount of information into distinct sets of key data” (p. 63). Moreover, the purpose of the modified van Kaam approach is to select a central phenomenon, explore it, “relate information” and thematize the data into groups (Tatro, p. 63).

Marshall and Rossman (1995) suggest prior to the use of the modified van Kaam data collection and analysis method, researchers must go through an epoché. I achieved epoché by practicing what van Manen (2002) calls mindfulness meditation, or what Moustaka (1994) would claim to be “reflection and self-dialogue” (p. 90) before, during, and after the interviews with my participants. The process of epoché enabled me to become familiar with my own viewpoints, prejudices, and assumptions about the ways servant leaders in non-profit organizations fostered the professional and personal growth and development of their employees.

**Credibility and Transferability**

According to Merriam (2009), the qualitative researcher’s perception of credibility deals with the question “how congruent are the findings with reality” (p. 213).
Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest credibility is one of the utmost critical factors for facilitating trustworthiness. The authors also suggest when participants’ responses are derived from different sample sites, such as the six different non-profit organizations in this study; the credibility of the study findings is likely to be enhanced in the eyes of future researchers of same phenomenon.

Triangulation was helpful in addressing the credibility of the findings of this study. I used a combination of data collection methods, including electronic questionnaires, as well online and telephonic interviews. Further, following data collection and transcription, I employed participant validation, which involved sending the transcript to each participant and getting feedback from them. This process gave the participants sufficient time to review their transcripts to ensure accuracy and provide additional input if necessary before data analysis and interpretation.

Merriam (1998) suggests transferability “is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations” (p. 125). To enhance the transferability of the findings of this study to other sites that are similar to those where this study was conducted, I provided sufficient, detailed, and pertinent information about the study. The information included the demographics of the participants who contributed the data, the number of leaders and organizations that took part in the study, the data collection methods utilized, the number of data collection sessions as well as the duration of each interview, which was approximately 1-2 hours. I utilized thick descriptions as the primary tool for ensuring transferability. Merriam (2009) recommends thick descriptions as the most common method to enhance the likelihood of transferring the results of one qualitative study to another. Merriam suggests, “It [thick description] refers to a
description of the findings with adequate evidence presented in the form of quotes from participant interviews” (p. 227).
CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF DATA

This chapter presents the data and findings of the study. Numerous themes emerged from the data. The themes described the ways the six participants thought they fostered the growth and development of their employees. In addition, the themes described the key servant leadership characteristics the participants thought they exhibited in the performance of their job, the key challenges they faced in their practice as servant leaders, and the suggestions they offered to enhance their servant leadership practice.

Participants Contributions to Employee Personal and Professional Growth

The data revealed the participants reported that they contributed to their employees’ personal and professional growth in several ways. The participants thought they established positive learning environments, modelled learning in their organizations, increased training and development budgets, afforded more time to employees to attend free community-based workshops, sought external agencies that provided low-cost training to employees, mentored employees, and coached employees.

Created Positive Organizational Learning Environments

Many participants thought they established positive learning environments in their organizations through the open exchange of ideas. Joanne’s example endeavoured to forge an open and safe environment in which she respected and valued the opinions and ideas of her employees. As Joanne states

_I endeavour to create an open, honest and safe environment in which everyone’s ideas are respected and valued. I am more likely to coach a person to finding a solution rather than telling them my opinion at the beginning of our conversation and risk shutting them down at the start._
Moreover, Christine claimed her servant leadership had led to the successful creation of a “very open and authentic” learning environment. By trust building, listening and awareness, and placing people first Christine claimed to have aided in the creation of an open and authentic learning environment. Joanne and Christine’s examples are consistent with Klein and Bugenhagen’s (2009) suggestion that servant leaders create comfortable learning environments by providing conditions that support open exchange of ideas, acceptance of these ideas, and sharing of opinions.

When employees’ derived new knowledge by seeking out answers to organizational problems, Joanne refrained from providing them a solution, rather she coached them to determine the answer. Christine believes she motivated her employees to “be more curious, self-reflective and open to learning holistically”. The views expressed by Christine and Joanne reflect those of Buchen (2011), who noted servant leaders “serve learning [that is] not just quantitative or incremental but qualitative and holistic” (p. 136).

Many participants thought a positive learning environment in non-profit organizations could be fostered by encouraging employees to learn and develop personally and professionally. David perceived his servant leadership as fostering a positive learning environment in his workplace by encouraging his employees to think for themselves and exhibit independent thought. As David remarked, “[servant leadership] encourages people to think for themselves, to stretch and try to be the best we can be, to recognize that each has specific things to contribute that all can learn from.” Furthermore, he recognized that each employee had something to share and contribute. Neil strove to get his employees to “adopt the view that learning (questioning) is a good thing – and that they will challenge themselves and others”. In a similar vein, Laub
(1999) believed employees of servant leaders were more susceptible to exhibiting independent critical thinking and learning.

Neil thought he nurtured a positive learning environment by creating a positive learning culture. He strove to get his employees to think how learning today would not just benefit them now, but also in the future. He built into this learning culture, that change should be viewed in a positive light, and change was the impetus for individual growth. Furthermore, David thought that when his employees took on extra roles in the organization, they learned from those experiences. David continues,

*To foster a culture where change is viewed in a positive light – so that change is essential for the individuals/organizations to develop and grow. To have staff take as much responsibility as they are comfortable with so they can learn from these experiences and pass this ethic on to others.*

**Modelled Learning**

Several of the participants thought they fostered learning in non-profit organizations by modelling learning. Daria claimed she championed a learning environment in her organization by “Leading by example and encouragement seems to rub off on the people I work with and those that I serve. I am always looking for ways to learn new things and obtain more professional development”. Trish indicated she made funds readily available for employee learning and development needs (e.g. courses, workshops) and gave her employees sufficient time to pursue learning endeavours. Furthermore, Trish credited her modelling as a workplace learner as an impetus for employee development, “I believe that my staff feel as though we have a learning environment as a result of making funds and time available for them to use for learning, as well as modeling by myself, and my directors”. Daria thought she fostered employee personal development by modelling certain behaviours employees wished to emulate. She
remarked her employees’ appreciation of her caring persona. She added, “a few staff have said my exemplification of caring has helped them to pursue their goals and development that they were aiming for in their lives”. The findings appear to support Covey’s (1990) views. Convoy believes that servant leaders could influence their employees through modelling. Moreover, Daria and Trish’s views are consistent with Russell and Stone’s (2002) suggestion that such visibility and display of desired behaviours (e.g. learning and caring) influences employees in turn to practice this behaviour.

**Increased Training and Development Budgets**

Several participants noted they increased training budgets since they became executive directors or managers. Increases in training budgets came in the form of enhancing individual budgeting and allotments for employees to pursue educational advancement. David remarked that since he had been the executive director of his organization, he has included an educational allowance into employee benefits.

Furthermore, Trish remarked, “*Individual training budgets ($500 and 5 days for FTE’s) has remained consistent for a long time.* However, quite recently Trish oversaw the development (with the support of her Board) to earmark a $10,000 surplus into an education fund. She described this fund as “*allowing any staff to apply for up to $10,000 for extraordinary learning experiences*”. Since this fund’s inception, two people have used it to cover expenses travelling out of town for a weeklong conference.

Some participants mentioned their organization’s training dollars had not increased, even though the organizations have provided employees more time to attend free community-based workshops. Joanne remarked the overall hard dollars allotted to training and development had not increased; but rather “*the focus on the importance of*
learning has increased and has been communicated to all staff”. She added that rather than inserting a number in the annual budget for training, the “thought is given to individual needs and desires”. Joanne alleges she was creative when tapping into training opportunities as they arose in the community, “We have been creative in tapping into opportunities as they arise that haven’t required additional dollars being spent but rather investing staff time to participate”. Neil, on the other hand, said that his training budget fluctuates annually. He believed there was no correlation between learning and development budgets as learning in his organization is situation-specific, that is, employees learn what they think they should learn. Neil noted, “Budgets have fluctuated over the past couple of years – but there is not necessarily a correlation between learning and training/development budgets as it also depends on what it is that staff wants to learn”. Similar to Joanne, Neil remarked that as his employees became aware of free or inexpensive workshops or seminars in the community, money was not perceived as the problem. Rather, the employees needed to be afforded more time to pursue development opportunities. The strides made by Neil, Trish, Joanne, and David to augment training and development budgets is consistent with Flint’s (2011) recommendation that servant leaders insert additional monies into employee training budgets to allow individuals to attend off-site training such as seminars to help them improve job skills. Likewise, Greenleaf et al. (2003) believed servant leaders make available funds for employee personal and professional development.

**Encouraged Employees to Attend Free Workshops**

Many participants sought low-cost (or free) workshops facilitated by external agencies and partners for their employees. These workshops were hosted by the
municipal government, other non-profit organizations, or in some rarer instances, by for-profit corporations. Most participants stated workshops provided an avenue to pursue low-cost training for employees. David commented numerous opportunities to attend local workshops and courses were available at reasonable cost “in areas of interest or relevance. As a non-profit [organization]” he said, “we are quick to take advantage of the opportunities in the community, lunch and learn sessions through volunteer [centers], we make them available for people [his staff] that are interested”. Daria sought free courses or seminars that were available in the larger community and then invited her employees to attend with her. She indicated many non-profit organizations were willing to offer deals or even provide free training seminars on various topics to her organization. As she said, “one nice thing about nonprofits is that many agencies are willing to either “cut a deal” or provide free seminars or training sessions on a variety of topics”. Her advice was to build relationships with other agencies. She indicated building rapport with external agencies now may lead to discounted or potentially free training opportunities for non-profit employees in the future. She stated, “Building relationships with other agencies also helps to get a foot in the door when it comes to discounted or free training opportunities”. Neil believed it was strategic to “piggyback on training that is already being offered by others”.

In addition to seeking workshops external to their organizations, the participants brought external organizations to facilitate workshops in their organizations. Joanne tapped into corporate donors that specialized in a service that was relevant to the development of her employees. For example, she mentioned that she invited in corporate donors “to provide and facilitate training on communication, personality traits,
recognition of personal and professional boundaries”. Furthermore, Christine described using pro-bono mentorships in the past, by bringing in volunteer professionals to mentor her employees in areas requiring development. As she said, “I seek to find low-cost opportunities for staff to engage in. I have found many opportunities for pro-bono mentorships, and other excellent trainers who will provide services at no or low cost”.

Joanne noted facilitating skills development workshops herself to ameliorate the constraints imposed by small employee development budgets. Joanne trained as a workshop facilitator before taking up her current occupation. She mentioned that despite working with low training budgets, she had contributed to employee learning in the workplace by ascertaining what skills employees wished to learn, and planned and implemented the workshop herself. As she put it, “the staff decides on the topic and I facilitate the session topic”. Joanne presented an example below:

Having skills as a facilitator, at the annual staff retreat for example on a workshop I facilitated about group communication, and how to interact with a group, dealing with different ways of listening, I thought it would be interesting to have the employees identify with a bird: giving a description of the bird, how did the employee process things for example, as an owl, I am an owl I communicate this way, but you’re an eagle you communicate that way.

Mentored Employees

Many participants commented using mentoring to foster employee personal and professional development. They thought empathy informed their mentoring practices the most. Joanne discussed one example of mentoring a young woman who recently started a family. Joanne cited her empathy has enabled her to reduce the employee’s hesitancy over juggling work-life balance. As she said, “mentoring a young woman who started a family, showing empathy was instrumental to understanding the challenges she is facing, [which] goes a long way for clearing out their hesitancy, and fear that they cannot do it”. 
Joanne understood that the mentee’s dedication to their professional career could take away from family time. Joanne invited her family (husband and kids) to attend mandatory events her organization held in the community to spend more time with them.

Daria believed the mentoring relationship created between her and her mentees was about understanding people: “understanding [employees] help them to develop themselves, surpass their own knowledge about what they can do, and mentor them to achieve the extras in life”. Daria perceived her employees were highly appreciative of her mentoring approach. Christine believed her empathy came out the most in a mentoring relationship, which resulted in employee development and trust. As she said, “I would say that in the relationships I have mentoring, certainly empathy is about paying attention…this is what really drives employee growth…I find dialogue and conversation is often rushed in today’s workplace, this troubles authenticity”. Cohen (2003) advanced mentors demonstrate a desire to serve mentees by exhibiting empathetic listening, and attempting to understand their mentee’s concerns. Johnson (2007) likewise suggested effective mentors understand their protégé’s feelings, thoughts, and struggles from the protégé’s point of view. The participants’ views on mentoring appear to support those of Cohen and Johnson.

**Coached Employees**

Many participants perceived fostering employee personal and professional development through coaching. The participants commented the servant leadership characteristic that informed their coaching was commitment to the growth of people. Christine remarked that she benefited from a coaching arrangement when she was coming up the ranks. She believed strongly that coaching “opens up staff to new ways of
learning and growing”. She credited her commitment to others’ growth and change, in particular her commitment to see them fully realize their abilities and value. She said, “When you coach someone it is really about the commitment to that belief, it is really about empowering people”. Daria perceived coaching signified to the employees that she cared to “see them do much better than they can do, work out what things they may try in the future”. Neil coached his organization’s supervisors regularly, asking such questions as “what would you do”? He stated that his workers who are age 55+ were apprehensive of change. These workers “want to be told what to do as opposed to what would you do?” The tough part for Neil was that he believed too many “people are complacent with being told what to do”. Neil stated that he cared about the growth of his people, but sometimes his employees took issue with realizing his concern for their growth. Trish suggested that in her practice as a coach, she genuinely showed that she took an interest in her employees’ growth and that interest laid the foundation for her coaching relationships.

Trish stated

I try to influence their growth trajectory outside this workplace, if they say they want a management position and we don’t have an opening then I use my networks to find them a management position outside...if I can accommodate their goal, I will use my networks to get them there.

Some participants thought empathetic listening shaped their practice as a coach. Joanne used coaching regularly. She scheduled meetings with her employees and set aside time for “individual deeper discussions and coaching”. She perceived her ability to listen and empathize with an employee she coached created a safe and comfortable setting, which helped to “perhaps reduce the stressful power effects of my position”. Once this environment is fostered, she adds, “It is amazing the creative thinking that evolves”. Trish perceives listening and communication are additional ways to support
employees’ growth in the coaching process. She stated, “Being an attentive and empathetic listener, gives others confidence in my abilities to help and guide [them]”.

Christine’s comment on coaching and empowering employees is analogous with Werhane’s (2007) belief “that servant leaders may be effective in providing keys to empowerment” (p. 85). Moreover, Trish’s comment on being coach and servant leader requires empathy is consistent with Mosley and Mosley’s (2010) recommendation that “servant leaders’ focus on listening intently and reflectively to others... [And] strive to understand and empathize with others” (p. 247). Lastly, Trish’s comment on using her networks to advance one employee’s career goals bares a resemblance to one of Alcala’s (2009) participant’s remark about assessing where an employee wanted to be in the future and used their personal networks to help actualize this employee’s career aspirations.

**Prevalent Servant Leadership Characteristics of Participants**

Analysis of the data identified the participants thought they exhibited five servant leadership characteristics. The five leadership characteristics exhibited by the participants were (1) stewardship, (2) commitment to the growth of people, (3) community building, (4) awareness, and (5) conceptualization.

**Stewardship**

The participants identified stewardship as their primary servant leadership characteristic. Joanne remarked that one of the more important roles she played was ensuring that her employees were equipped with the resources and tools to do their jobs well. One resource she noted was the often untapped, inherent resources within each employee, in particular, their insight. As Joanne remarked it, “I believe in tapping into individual insights to help create ‘out-of-the-box’ thinking”. David believed his
stewardship created more freedom for employees to be opened to questioning things, to feel more comfortable to try new things. As he commented, “I think that it recognizes the healthy connectedness of professional and personal development in the development of the whole person”.

Christine thought the servant leadership characteristic she identified with most was stewardship. To Christine, stewardship means focusing on properly managing employees, through encouragement, support and enabling. Moreover, Christine strongly believed in the stewardship of her organization’s resources, and her “responsible response to them”. She believed that through effective stewardship she could influence employees to pay more attention to and seek out personal and professional development opportunities. Daria has exhibited stewardship through visibly committing to serving the needs of others. She fostered stewardship by “building relationships with people and then finding out what their goals, ideas and dreams are”. Daria viewed her employees as resources to be developed.

David’s comment about utilizing organizational resources to develop the employee is strikingly similar to Daft and Lane’s (2008) recommendation that servant leaders “nourish others and help them become whole...servant leaders care about followers spirits as well as their minds and bodies” (p. 178). Similarly, Joanne’s remark about tapping into employee’s unknowing and often “untapped” resources is consistent with Greenleaf et al’s. (2003) postulation that servant leaders believe their employees possess intrinsic value far beyond what employees believe they have. In addition, Block (1987) posited stewardship “assumes first-and-foremost a commitment to serving the needs of others” (p. 88). He defined stewardship as holding something in trust for another
Commitment to the Growth of People

The second characteristic the participants exhibited was commitment to the growth of people. Neil described his practice as a servant leader led him to facilitate an environment where employee development would not be static and that employees were free to develop in their own professional and personal capacities. As he states, “I think this characteristic assists and supports staff to think that their professional development is not static - that staff may continue to develop in their professional/personal capacity – and to consider new challenges as they arise”. Daria stated being committed to the growth of people as a “no-brainer” because a servant leader committed to an employee’s growth would find that the employee would in turn be more opened to seeking professional development. She continued, “I feel that it [committed to employee development] is about creating the right atmosphere for learning and encouraging people to grow”. One way in which Daria exemplified this servant leadership characteristic was by taking classes toward her CCA certification with one of her employees who had shown interest in the certification. The course Daria and her employee took was sponsored through the organization’s education fund. She remarked that she and her employee encouraged each other, learned new information, and met once a month to write essays together. She also noticed her experience with the employee was an excellent way to get to know someone outside of work and “to pursue a goal together in learning”. Trish perceived that by building an environment on intimacy and trust has really allowed her employees to feel safe to explore their learning and
development interests and passions. As she opined, “I try to create an environment of trust and intimacy that allows staff to feel safe to explore their interests and to develop. We listen to each other and support learning endeavours that contribute to meaningful professional development”.

**Building Community**

Many participants noted community building as a servant leadership characteristic they exhibited. Comments made by Neil and Joanne were typical of the other participants remarks. Neil believed through his practice of community building as a servant leader had given him the opportunity to impart the notion of service and fun to his employees. As he stated, “To impart the notion of service & fun - to take the job seriously but not yourself”. He further imparted the notion that servicing the community can be fun, and that service to the community is to help solve community problems. Neil enabled his employees to realize the impact their work had on the wider community, “to impart the notion of service and to channel it out outward toward problem solving and to see how the organization fits into the wider community”. Joanne remarked that the work they did was to empower community members to be more actively involved with augmenting their own communities. As she expressed, “All our work is focussed on empowering our community to be actively involved in changing the social conditions in our community. I believe that we must model the collaboration and commitment that we ask of others”. The views expressed by Neil and Joanne are similar to those of Flint (2011). Flint advocated “servant leaders set the standard and model the [desired] behaviour for their team” (p. 63).
Awareness

The fourth common characteristic exhibited by most participants was awareness. David and Neil emphasized values and responsibility in their discussion of awareness as servant leaders, and their comments were similar to those of several of their colleagues. David viewed awareness as being aware of the way he lives his values, which he cited as important to him and to those he leads. As he remarked, “Being aware the way we live our values is important to ourselves as well as others. The decisions we make and the values we base those decisions on impacts ourselves, others we know, and others we may never know”. One example David provided was about one’s ongoing responsibility to build family. A way he demonstrated his awareness to his employees was by making organizational policies more family oriented. By creating personal benefit packages and granting family days, he stated, allowed his employees to take days off to attend to family responsibilities. Neil also self-identified with awareness. Neil, unlike David, tried to impart on employees the importance of awareness. He has modeled to his employees the need to be aware of others in the work environment, “to remove the negative drama/culture of complaint from the workplace. To try to get people to think about what it is they do and how their reaction to situations can either escalate a situation or defuse a situation”.

David’s comment about contriving organizational policies as family oriented is consistent with Autry’s (2004) recommendation that servant leaders would be willing to accommodate employees request for time off to address family responsibilities. Moreover, David’s comment on making his employees more aware of situations and their reaction to them can either defuse or escalate the matter is analogous to Renesch’s (2002)
assertion that awareness is “a disturber and an awakener” when applied to most situations (p. 157). In addition, Greenleaf et al. (2003) propounded servant leaders who exhibit general awareness, especially self-awareness, is best able to understand issues involving values, responsibility, and ethics. The views expressed by David and Neil appear to support those of Greenleaf and his colleagues.

**Conceptualization**

The fifth common characteristic exhibited by many participants was conceptualization. Trish recounted always being told that she had a vision and always dreamt big. Trish perceived her dreaming big approach influenced her employees to be more innovative and creative in their work. As she expressed, “I have often been told that I have a lot of vision – that I dream big. I think this allows others to be creative and innovative in their work”. Trish conceptualized the importance of employees pursuing professional development as the catalyst for their success in the organization she represented. David proffered an interpretation of his practice in conceptualization as being able to assist people by not getting “bogged down or giving up when they encounter barriers or resistance”. In a similar vein, David believed conceptualization was about seeing a bigger picture to help put things in perspective, and to “allow employee energy go into a positive direction”. Trish and David’s comments are consistent with Kirst-Ashman and Hull’s (2011) suggestion that servant leaders “look at the organization’s total picture and have a vision about what the organization might become...they encourage others to be creative and dream of how things could or should be” (p. 180). In addition, the views of Trish and David also reflect those of Greenleaf et
al. (2003), who claim conceptualization encompasses a servant leader’s ability to dream big dreams.

**Challenges Limiting the Practice of Non-profit Servant Leadership**

The findings of this study revealed the participants encountered manifold challenges to their practice of servant leadership. The challenges noted by the participants were servant leadership was (1) not conducive to business management, (2) difficult to employ when disciplining employees, (3) difficult to employ in hierarchies, (4) not being taken seriously, and (5) suited for those in a developmental role only.

Joanne suggested that servant leadership challenges “depend on the situation”. She added further that servant leadership was not conducive to the “cold hearted side of business”. As well, Joanne identified the biggest problem for her personally was servant leadership was not conducive to business management. She remarked that her practice of servant leadership conflicted with Human Resources Management (HRM) in moments of disciplining employees or even letting employees go. She added that servant leaders were considered as healers. When she had to let someone go, dismissing employees worked antithetical to her leadership style. She remarked, “When I have to let someone go, I don’t think servant leadership goes hand-in-hand with HRM when letting someone go, because it is difficult being truly empathetic and being a healer”. Daria, similar to Joanne, admitted practicing servant leadership could get tough when you need to “put your foot down and lay down the law”.

Trish thought her servant leadership practice works 99 percent of the time, but to her that 1 percent “can be hell”. She admits that closing programs was simple, but having to make dismissals was always challenging. She stated, “It is always challenging when
there is a disciplinary issue within the staff, when an inherent trust has been violated...the goodness of servant leadership is tied into the challenges”. With Trish, the issue with letting employees go was that through her practice as a servant leader she has forged personal relationships with all her employees, which made disciplinary matters worse. Trish remarked “I’d rather be happy as a servant leader 99 percent of the time and deal with the 1 percent difficulty once in a blue moon”. Joanne, Trish, and Daria’s comments and concerns about disciplining staff is consistent with Prosser’s (2007) claims that servant leadership practice could be challenged when dealing with problematic employees and warranting their dismissal or termination. In addition, Ebener (2010) found servant leadership could be interpreted as being too soft on employees during moments warranting discipline.

Neil believed that much of the challenge in being a servant leader is “around hierarchies”. Neil stated that sometimes he needed to take a top-down approach when scheduling people to work shifts, which were incongruent with what the employees wanted. Neil also stated, “You need to be much more directive as a servant leader if you did a direct service” such as running a group home.

Many participants noted the difficulty of them being taken seriously as practicing servant leaders by some of their employees. Daria admitted that the varied generations represented in today’s organizations created a rift between accepted traditional leadership styles and new emerging trends in leadership. Daria summed up the challenge best, “In the non-profit world older generations raised as managers let the employees know who’s boss, they tell the staff this…a servant leader when they come along they (older generations) don’t take them seriously”. Daria noticed her colleagues view her practice of
servant leadership as “huggy bear, these people did not know what to make of me what I first entered”. However, the past year or so, Daria admitted, the skeptics were beginning to take notice of her leadership skills, some of which they had never seen or had heard about. She noted they were starting to see value in her servant leadership approach. As she stated, “They are starting to see leadership skills that they did not know about, and see the value…but the challenge is that others still don’t understand servant leaders and see them as push-over’s”.

A few participants remarked servant leadership was best suited for managers in a developmental role only, such as in Human Resources Development (HRD). Joanne recounted her best moments as a servant leader when she worked in a HRD training and development role for the governments of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. As Joanne remarked, “When I was head of training for Saskatchewan and Manitoba, I was strongly a servant leader…what the learners need was our primary responsibility, I did not have to discipline them or talk about sick leave”. She continued, “It was easy to stay in that [servant-leader] mode; it became a different situation when I was given more responsibility, and so it’s tougher to become a servant leader”. Still a few participants noticed servant leaders were more susceptible to being taken advantage of by their employees. Trish perceived the inherent goodness of being a servant leader as inciting the challenges she has experienced. She commented, “Part of being a servant-leader demands some openness and vulnerability on the part of the leader which can lead to be taken advantage of by people if they wanted to”.

Daria alleges that in for-profit organizations the focus is about achieving the bottom-line, whereas in non-profit organizations “it’s not like that, the bottom-line is
service”. However, Autry (2004) contends, “servant leadership [can] enhance productivity and benefit the bottom line” (p. xix). Furthermore, Daria’s challenge of not being taken seriously and being seen as soft, is consistent with other purported experiences documented by Hunter (2004) who adduced servant leaders across North America were viewed as being warm, fuzzy and passive.

**Participants Personal Suggestions for Improving Practice as Servant Leaders**

The participants proffered the following suggestions for improving practice as a servant leader: continually pursuing servant leadership training, increasing time spent with other practising servant leaders, building-up servant leader network, and lastly, investing more time relationship building with employees.

Many participants thought attending servant leadership training, workshops, and seminars augmented their practice of servant leadership. The participants thought by attending more servant leadership training would help them improve as servant leaders, in particular, help them assist their employees develop and grow personally and professionally. Daria noted that there would always be ways for her to improve her practice as a servant leader, and she was always looking for them. As she opined, “There are always ways to improve and I am always looking out for them. I try to attend training or at least read books, websites and talk to others about ways to improve as a servant leader”. Furthermore, Trish believed additional education and surrounding herself with other practicing servant leaders would also help her to improve. She remarked, “I will continue to surround myself with servant leaders, to read and attend workshops that provide insight and information into this type of leadership, and to watch and observe those whom I admire”. Christine postulated that investing more time relationship building
with her employees would reduce the adverse hierarchal effects her role has on the practice of her servant leadership. Christine’s thoughts are summarized below,

*I think there is opportunity for me to improve in respect to supporting the growth of staff more by investing more time into the relationships I have, and encouraging others to do so as well. It is also an ongoing challenge to encourage staff to see that a hierarchical structure, and the language associated with that, does not generate the best outcomes.*

Daria and Trish’s practice of enhancing their servant leader network is analogous with Alcala’s (2009) recommendation that for servant leaders to improve themselves, they needed to surround themselves with quality people with similar values.

**Summary**

Data gathered from the six Saskatchewan non-profit organizations have revealed the diverse ways the participants thought they fostered employee personal and professional growth and development, and provided the basis for the presentation of the study’s findings. The participants provided specific examples of the numerous ways they thought their servant leadership characteristics contributed to their employees’ growth and development. They also mentioned the diverse challenges they experienced in their practice as servant leaders. Furthermore, each participant provided some thoughts and reflections on how they could improve their servant leadership practice.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to develop an understanding of the perceived contribution of six servant leaders to the growth and development of their employees. The study sought to give voice to these leaders within the process of understanding their perceptions of the ways they contributed to the personal and professional development of their employees, the most prevalent servant leadership characteristics they exhibited, and the challenges they faced in their servant leadership practice. The study used the experiences of these servant leaders as the basis for offering recommendations to enhance the personal and professional growth and development of their employees.

This Chapter discusses the findings of this study in light of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Six servant leaders who occupied CEO positions in non-profit organizations were interviewed for this study. Emerging themes were identified from analyzing the participants’ responses. The themes discussed are the participants’ perceptions of the ways they have fostered their employee personal and professional growth and development, the most prevalent servant leadership characteristics they identified in the performance of their duties, the challenges they faced as servant leaders, and the suggestions they offered for best practices to enhance the personal and professional growth and development of their employees. Each of these four themes, originally introduced in Chapter 4 is discussed in greater detail below.

Fostering Employee Growth and Development

The findings of this study revealed some strategies the participants perceived to have fostered the personal and professional growth and development of their employees.
The strategies included coaching, mentoring, workshops and seminars, and establishing a learning environment and culture in the organization. The participants indicated they used coaching to foster the personal and professional growth and development of their employees. Christine and Daria thought coaching signalled to their employees that they cared about their employees’ personal and professional growth and development. Christine believed she was able to encourage her employees to “new ways of learning and growing” through her coaching ability. She related that her commitment to the growth and development of her employees to enable them to fully realize their abilities informed her servant leadership coaching style. Trish envisaged at the heart of her coaching arrangements was the idea that her employees knew she was genuinely interested in their growth. David also credited the success of his coaching relationships to his commitment to the growth of his employees.

Several researchers imply coaching is one key tool servant leaders use to foster the growth and development of their employees. Astroth et al. (2011) suggest servant leaders need to coach rather than control their employees. The authors posit that when servant leaders in non-profit organizations serve as coaches they create an environment that supports employees to excel, and encourages them to bring with them their “passion to the workplace so that [the workplace] can blossom” (p. 5). According to Greenberg (2009), coaching supports the aspirant to think through existing problems to make something greater and different happen. He argues coaching makes servant leaders more successful in motivating their employees who become more self-confident in their abilities, and harbour a stronger work ethic. Greenberg also mentions good coaching encourages employees to enjoy performing their duties. Further, in their study of the
effects of servant leaders as coaches in non-profit organizations, Cihak and Howland (2002) concluded that coaches gained personal fulfillment through the offering of random and selfless gestures. As they opined, “coaches who become servant leaders gain influence, strengthen relationships, and liberate themselves as they uplift their co-workers” (p. 55). In addition, Greenleaf and Spears (2002) suggest a clear relationship exists between developing people, coaching, and servant leadership. According to them, “There is very little sustained performance at the level of excellence of any kind, anywhere, without coaching” (p. 139).

The findings of this study support the views of these authors about servant leaders as coaches. The participants indicated they employed coaching to foster their employees’ growth, development, and advancement in the organization. Further, they thought coaching improved their own servant leadership practice, enhanced their relationship with their employees, as well as the relationship among their employees. The participants perceived their practice as servant leader coaches spurred empowerment within their protégés, cultivated the will to grow personally and professionally, and most importantly, the participants thought their employees felt empowered to learn through the workplace utilizing organizational resources such as the executive director or manager as a coach.

The participants also perceived to have fostered the growth and development of their employees through mentoring. Perry (2009) views mentoring simply as servant leadership. According to him, mentors, “serve the learning needs of another by building and sustaining a long-term relationship whose objective is to help the other person grow, learn, and reach his or her potential” (p. 45). Williams (2005) examines the transformative role formal mentoring relationships have on strengthening the non-profit
sector and developing talent in non-profit organizations. Williams concludes manifold reasons exist for non-profit organizations to make mentoring arrangements a priority. Steinbeck (2009) collected data over a three-week period from 143 teachers who received mentoring during their first year on-the-job training. Her results found a strong positive correlation between mentoring and servant leadership characteristics. Her findings suggest that the protégés thought the mentoring relationship was more beneficial when the mentors exhibited servant leadership characteristics.

The findings of this study are congruous with the findings by Williams (2005) and Steinbeck (2009). Most participants indicated they were servant leader mentors at some point during their leadership in the organization. The participants noted empathy and building community were the prevalent servant leadership characteristics that informed their mentoring practice. The participants thought their mentoring instilled trust (by exhibiting empathetic listening) and collaboration (through community building) in their employees. They reported being satisfied with their mentorship results, largely because they felt their employees (protégés) were satisfied with the ways they were being developed through mentorship.

Joanne mentored an employee on the strategies for reducing stress after that employee had a baby. Having been in that position herself, Joanne worked with that employee to reduce her concerns by giving her some examples grounded in her own previous experience. Joanne told the employee, “here’s what I did to get over that, people think the grass is not always greener on the other-side, but I showed the employee that it can be”. According to Johnson (2007), “effective mentors are both able and willing to understand the protégé’s thoughts, feelings, and struggles from the protégé’s point of
view” (p. 78). Daria indicated her mentoring relationships centered on understanding people, especially the conflicts they experienced between their personal and professional lives. Daria perceived she helped her employees develop themselves, expand their own abilities and capabilities, and mentored them to achieve greater things in life. Cohen (2003) suggests when mentors demonstrate a desire to serve they exhibit being empathetic listeners who attempt to understand their employee’s concerns. Christine perceived her mentoring relationship with mentees often required her to demonstrate empathy. She thought her empathy resulted in a trusting relationship with her employees. Christine stated, “I would say that in the relationships I have mentoring, certainly empathy is about paying attention…this is what really drives employee growth…I find dialogue and conversation is often rushed in today’s workplace, this troubles authenticity”. David credited his success in establishing a mentoring relationship with his employees to his building of a sense of community within the organization. According to Steinbeck (2009), at the cynosure of servant leadership and mentoring are relationships. In addition, Sprague, Kopfman, and Dorsey (1998) suggest mentoring involves building community in the organization, and had proposed community building approaches to mentoring. The findings of this study support the view that relationship building with employees is critical to successful mentoring by servant leaders.

Inbarasu (2008) suggests employees develop by watching their leaders model willingness to learn behaviours. Furthermore, Kouzes and Posner (2007) indicate leaders model learning when they use their personal examples of success to encourage their employees. Some participants perceived they fostered a positive learning environment simply by modelling their behaviour as lifelong learners. Kouzes and Posner also note,
healthy organizations depend on the servant leaders “remain[ing] as lifelong learner[s]” (p. 64). Daria thought she fostered a positive learning environment for her employees through “leading by example”. She perceived her modelling of learning rubs off on her employees and inspired them to become learners. In addition to making sure employee development funds were available, Daria participated in numerous workshops and seminars to acquire new knowledge. Part of her modelling included sharing her new knowledge from workshops and seminars with her employees. She believed that through her modelling of caring for the needs of others in the organization “has helped them to pursue their goals and development that they were aiming for in their lives”. Moreover, Trish credited her modelling as a workplace learner asculminating in employee personal and professional development by “making funds and time available for them [employees] to use for learning, as well as modeling [learning] myself”.

Brumley (2007) noted one of her respondents used such phrases as “we’re life-long learners, when we’re stagnant, we decay”. She concluded the emphasis on the all-inclusive ‘we’ suggested her respondents saw modelling learning as a strategy in employee development. Another of Brumley’s respondents said “I model professional growth to classroom teachers…I feel like if I model that as a principal, my teachers will do the same” (p. 111). My participants viewed modelling their learning as a key strategy infostering the growth and development of their employees. Few participants perceived their employees wanting to emulate certain behaviours modelled by them, as well as wanting to attend external workshops and courses inspired by the participants’ commitment to and attendance in them.
All participants sought learning opportunities for their employees. In addition, most participants believed their commitment to the growth of their employees was one of their key servant leadership characteristics, as it facilitated the establishment of a learning culture in the organization. Fairholm (1998) suggests that servant leaders serve the development needs of others by making time available for them and giving them the attention they need. The participants perceived setting aside time to support their employees’ personal and professional development helps to convey the importance of a learning culture in the organization. Joanne learned from her 2010 employee performance appraisals that they did appreciate the care she showed for them by the many hours she spent to help them achieve their personal and professional growth. Joanne assisted her employees in their learning endeavours, but did so only when they asked for help, “the employee was in charge, and I was just there to help their success”. Christine perceived her relationships with employees improved by supporting their growth and development.

The participants thought they developed a positive learning culture in their organizations through in-house training and development opportunities. Joanne was a skilled and certified workshop facilitator, which was a critical skill because her organization’s training budget was limited. As several of her colleagues, Joanne thought she contributed to her employees’ learning by ascertaining with them the skills they wished to learn, and planning and delivering workshops to address those skills. As she remarked, “the staff decides on the topic and I facilitate the session topic”. Furthermore, Christine created in-house development opportunities by inviting volunteer professionals to mentor her employees in areas requiring development. As she remarked, “I seek to find low-cost opportunities for staff to engage in. I have found many opportunities for pro-
bono mentorships, and other excellent trainers who will provide services [in-house] at no or low cost”.

Beaver (2008) suggests the establishment of learning and development opportunities by servant leaders “enhances the self-development efforts of the follower and improves follower outcomes” (p. 37). In addition, Beaver advocated a relationship exists between the way servant leaders establish and promote creative learning and development opportunities in the organization and employee self-development. Beaver notes servant leaders foster employee self-development and growth by creating an organizational climate that is conducive to learning. As she opined, “follower self-development behaviours are enabled, in part, by allowing and encouraging follower self-determination, which encompasses the follower’s need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness and leads to intrinsic motivation, self-esteem, conceptual learning, and creativity” (p. 37). The participants thought they encouraged employee self-development and growth by involving them in making decisions about their learning.

In addition to designing, implementing, and facilitating in-house training programs, many participants used external groups to facilitate skills development workshops for their employees. David stated his employees made use of various training opportunities provided in the community partly to save on travel expenses attending out-of-town training. Joanne and her employees participated in community training activities, which included specialized programs, funded by corporate donors as long as they considered those programs relevant to their learning needs. She indicated two programs offered were personality development and communication skills.
The participants sought low-cost or free workshops and seminars offered by other non-profit organizations, government agencies, and even for-profit organizations as long those activities were relevant to the learning needs of their employees. They saw these workshops and seminars as a way to pursue further training at minimal cost. David mentioned, “As a nonprofit we are quick to take advantage of the opportunities in the community, lunch and learn sessions through Volunteer Saskatoon, we make them available for people [his staff] that are interested”. Daria indicated she sought courses or seminars offered in the larger community and invited her employees to join her to participate in those courses or seminars. In addition, Neil sought free or inexpensive training opportunities for his employees. He thought it was strategic to “piggyback on training that is already being offered by others”.

Many participants characterized themselves as servant leaders because of their emphasis on employee personal and professional development. Laub (1999) suggests employees who work for servant leaders display “independent critical thinking and learning” (as cited in Beaver, 2008, p. 38). David credited his servant leadership to fostering a positive learning environment in his organization by encouraging his employees to think for themselves and exhibit independent thought, separate from organizational expectations and norms. He thought promoting independent thinking by employees would suggest to them their views mattered to him. David wished to see his employees “develop by being all that they can be”. He thought every employee had something to share and contribute to the organization from which everyone could learn and benefit. Neil thought his employees would learn by questioning organizational norms, practices, and community policies. He believed through questioning employees
would challenge themselves as well as others. Furthermore, Neil believed in his employees’ personal and professional development. He advised his employees to be aware of the way their current learning activities would benefit them, including the prospects of promotion in the organization or a job in another organization.

**Prevalent Servant Leadership Characteristics of Participants**

Laub (1999) conducted a detailed survey of the world’s leading servant leadership researchers, and summarized the researchers’ views about the most prevalent characteristics of servant leaders. The summary is presented in the Table in Chapter 2. Laub concluded the most cited servant leadership characteristics by those who took part in his survey were commitment to the development of people, community building, employee empowerment and shared leadership, awareness and foresight, as well as being open, honest and vulnerable. He concluded that of these five characteristics, development of employees as well as employee empowerment and shared leadership were the two most prevalent.

The findings of my study revealed the participants exhibited four servant leadership characteristics in the performance of their duties and responsibilities, which were stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, community building, as well as conceptualization and foresight.

**Stewardship**

Stewardship involves the selection of service over one’s own self-interest. According to Magill (2000), stewardship is “where the simple acts of tending to the needs of the team must be the beginning and the end” (p. 241). The participants thought they demonstrated stewardship partly by positioning or using organizational resources
(including those external to their organizations) to support their employees’ development. Researchers have found the management of resources to support employees is at the heart of the stewardship characteristic because it demonstrated the servant leaders valued their employees (Brumley, 2007; Bohanak, 2007). Brumley reported several of his participants indicated their most prevalent servant leadership characteristic was stewardship. He quoted one of his participants who said, “People are absolutely invaluable. The heart of the school, in my thinking, is not the building or the grounds – it’s the humans” (p. 141). Another of Brumley’s participants indicated he demonstrated to his teachers he valued them by allowing “teachers [to] develop and own their programs…they are afforded the license and encouraged to practice their teaching craft as creatively as they choose” (p. 102).

In this study, Joanne thought one of her important roles was to enhance her employees’ development and success by providing them the resources and tools they needed to do their jobs well. She thought she valued her employees by allowing them to take charge of the programs they developed without her intervention unless they asked for her advice. Several participants indicated they used the organization’s resources as well as resources available from outside agencies to support their employees’ growth and development. Inbarasu (2008) states servant leaders serve others, including their employees, by using the organization’s available resources to meet their needs. Trish stated, “I try to influence their growth trajectory outside this workplace, if they say they want a management position and we don’t have an opening then I use my networks to find them a management position outside”. Servant leaders connect with people external to their organization to make things happen for their employees (Astroth, et al. 2011).
The findings of this study are congruent with Alcala (2009) findings. The participants in Alcala’s study provided examples of the way they addressed the needs of their employees. One participant asked his employees some probing questions to figure out what they needed and how he could assist them. In Bohanek’s (2007) study most of his participants indicated stewardship and caring for the needs of others was their primary servant leader characteristic. Similar to Brumley’s (2007) findings, Bohanek emphasised the leader and employees are resources that support each other in the institution. Bohanek states participants, “believed that administrators should help each other become resources to each other…this shows the servant leadership characteristic of service in wanting to help others and be a resource to others” (p. 65). In this study, David claimed he used his networks to assist in the growth and development of his employees, especially those with whom he was involved in a coaching relationship. Further, David indicated if an employee was looking to develop a specific skill, he would occasionally seek others within his organization that had the requisite skills, and encouraged that employee to connect with them.

**Commitment to the Growth of People**

In addition to stewardship, all the participants identified commitment to the growth of their employees as one of their servant leadership characteristics. They indicated they sought workshops and seminars on a regular basis and encouraged their employees to participate in them. Further, the findings revealed the participants thought they demonstrated a commitment to the growth and development of their employees by creating a positive learning environment by establishing a positive learning transfer climate, and a positive learning culture in the organization. Greenleaf et al. (2003)
contend one of the ways a servant leader can foster employee personal and professional growth and development is through the establishment of a positive learning culture and learning transfer climate.

Trish perceived her willingness to encourage her employees to listen to each other’s learning experience(s) fostered a supportive learning environment in the organization. She thought the supportive environment contributed to a meaningful personal and professional development experience for her and her employees. She perceived that by creating a positive learning environment encouraged her employees to seek out professional development. Neil thought he developed a learning environment by conveying that employee development was not circumscribed by satisfying narrow organizational objectives, and his employees were free to develop in their own professional and personal capacities.

In relation to the findings of three other studies, the findings of this study revealed the importance of a positive training transfer climate was secondary to that of creating a positive learning culture. The findings of this study are congruous with the findings of the studies conducted by Bohanek (2007) and Alcala (2009). The participants of this study perceived the creation of a positive learning environment by establishing a positive learning culture and positive training transfer climate added meaning to their employees’ professional development, as well as increased the freedom of employees to pursue their personal development at the expense of the organization.

In addition to creating a positive training transfer climate, the participants thought developing a learning culture in the organization was important to the growth and development of their employees. Trish thought her organization’s learning culture was
built on intimacy and trust, which allowed her employees to feel safe to explore learning and development interests to meet their goals. Daria attributed her commitment to the growth of her employees to the learning culture she has created in the organization, “I feel that it is about creating the right atmosphere for learning and encouraging people to grow”.

Alcala (2009) related that the secondary school principals in her study shared the importance, “of empowering their assistant principals and teachers, thereby providing opportunities for professional training” (p. 99). One issue explored by Alcala was leadership development for assistant principals. Alcala reported the participants developed a positive learning culture by granting assistant principals more hands-on experience in facilitating staff development workshops, a task often reserved for principals. Bohanek (2007) relates a servant leadership characteristic most prevalent within the eight superintendents in his study was the commitment to the growth and development of their staff. Six of eight participants in his study agreed creating a learning atmosphere was instrumental in developing others. One participant mentioned providing in-service training and allocating resources for a staff member to pursue professional development. The participant said, “I feel the responsibility to give them the professional development they need to continue to improve their teaching” (p. 68). The findings of this study suggest the participants viewed their commitment to the growth and development of their employees through the establishment of a learning culture and a learning transfer climate in their organizations as a key servant leadership characteristic they displayed.
Building Community

Many participants indicated community building was one servant leadership characteristic they exhibited in the performance of their duties and responsibilities. The participants thought they were involved in community building through their modelling of collaboration and commitment to build better communities both inside their organizations as well as in the communities they served. Neil perceived his community building practice provided him the opportunity to model the idea of combining service with self-satisfaction. Further, Neil thought imparting the notion of service to his employees and motivating them to channel it [service] outward toward solving community problems enabled them to realize the impact their work has on the organization, the community as well as their personal lives. Neil thought the process of helping employees realize the importance of community building was part of their own personal growth and development. Further, Joanne remarked by modelling collaboration and commitment to employees in her organization, she succeeded in empowering them to model similar attributes within their community.

Laub (1999) describes community building as forging strong personal relationships, valuing differences of others, and “work[ing] collaboratively with others” (p. 144). Beaver (2008) found the servant leaders of non-profit organizations in her study emphasized the importance of building lasting quality relationships with their employees. One employee in the study thought the relationship was inspired by her servant leader, “There’s a confidence in working with people that you’re going to come out on the other side, not carrying your flag or that person’s flag, but a different flag altogether – some new idea” (p. 68). Brumley (2007) found that building community was a prevalent
servant leadership characteristic the principals in her study exhibited. Her participants noted they “shared a sense of responsibility towards building this community” (p. 144).

Alcala (2009) found a strong link between her participants’ practice of community building and servant leadership. Her participants emphasized working collaboratively with employees as a team, sharing ideas and taking into consideration the employee input in the decision making process. Alcala identified modelling of expectations as a key component of the principals’ servant leadership. One participant said: “teachers see my enthusiasm…that I truly the love the kids…I lead by example and allow others to see that I genuinely do care about the kids” (p. 97). Bohanek (2007) concluded five of the eight superintendents in his study emphasized building relationships within the stakeholder community in their organization. Servant leaders can inspire followers through the modeling of commitment (Inbarasu, 2008).

The findings of this study support the conclusion of the works of the researchers mentioned in the preceding paragraphs. Like Bohanek (2007), Alcala (2009), and Brumley (2007), the participants perceived modelling commitment and collaboration as among the key servant leadership characteristics in fostering employee growth and development. They thought their practice of community building fostered employee personal and professional development by inspiring and empowering employees to emulate commitment and collaboration in their own communities.

**Conceptualization/Foresight**

Many participants indicated other key servant leadership characteristics they identified in their practice were conceptualization and foresight. According to Greenleaf et al. (2003), conceptualization enables the servant leader to “look at a problem (or an
organization) from a conceptualizing perspective means that one must think beyond day-to-day realities” (p. 18). Greenleaf et al. contend foresight is probably the only servant leadership characteristic “One may be born with” (p. 19) and foresight involves having an intuitive mind. They note foresight is the least discussed characteristic in the literature, and is in need of further exploration; I tend to agree with Greenleaf and his colleagues.

Greenleaf et al. (2003) believe that foresight is “closely related to conceptualization” (p. 19). In his study of eight public school superintendent servant leaders, Bohanek (2007) found that five of them emphasized conceptualization. In addition, five of them emphasized the importance of foresight, which further underscores the relationship and difference between the two characteristics. Bohanek maintains that “Foresight is closely related to conceptualization in that conceptualization relates to the big picture and vision; foresight relates to particular decisions” (p 65). Steinbeck (2009) and Spears (1998) believe servant leaders should combine foresight and conceptualization in their practice to enable them to “evaluate the lessons of the past” (p. 38). Both Steinbeck and Spears indicate their participants mentioned two ways their conceptualization and foresight contributed to their employees’ personal and professional development. The authors’ participants were prepared to deal with workplace uncertainties and employee vulnerabilities.

In this study, Daria perceived her foresight involved her attempt to understand her employees’ needs even before they aired those needs to her publicly, and exploring ways to help them address those needs. She saw that ability as one of her key servant leadership characteristics. Daria commented

_I find too many people take a reactive approach, which often means that aspects such as listening, empathy and awareness get pushed to one side to ‘deal with the_
crisis’ at the last minute, rather than anticipating outcomes and leaving oneself open to a more holistic approach. ‘Be prepared’ is my motto and I usually have a Plan B in place just in case.

Further, David thought through his “seeing [of] a bigger picture” approach, he was able to address the barriers to organizational innovation and creativity for his employees, and also help them to conceptualize and relate their performance to the organization. Trish recounted her employees commenting that her vision and her “think-big” approach inspired them to be more innovative and creative.

Bohanek (2007) perceived that his participants credited their foresight in foreseeing a potential community problem, and taking proactive action to ameliorate the problem. One participant contacted the board of education, employees, and the community about an issue, after which he sent out press releases to raise awareness about the issue. The participant was able to “analyze a problem and implement a solution that he believed would have the best possible result” (p. 64). Studies on servant leadership in non-profit organizations have paid limited attention to conceptualization and foresight as key servant leader characteristics. The participants’ perceived conceptualization and foresight as key servant leadership characteristics they exhibited in their everyday practice as servant leaders. Some of them perceived their employees benefiting from their display of conceptualization and foresight as it inspired employees to creativity and innovation, and assured them their needs were being looked after.

Challenges of Servant Leadership in Non-profit Organizations

The findings of the study revealed the participants faced some key challenges to the servant leadership practice. Many indicated a key challenge stemmed from the view that servant leadership was not, as Joanne remarked, conducive to the “cold-hearted side
of business”. She thought servant leaders found it difficult to overcome this challenge.

Joanne indicated her key servant leadership challenge related to Human Resources Management (HRM), especially in matters relating to disciplining or dismissing employees. Joanne remarked servant leaders were expected to be empathetic and healers; however, she thought having to let an employee go was probably antithetical to their leadership style. Daria indicated practicing servant leadership could get tough when a servant leader had to “put [their] foot down and lay down the law”. Neil believed much of the challenge servant leaders faced revolved “around hierarchies”, which might require taking a top-down approach to leadership at times. Trish believed that for her servant leadership worked 99 percent of the time; however, she remarked the 1 percent instance when it might not work “can be hell”. She admitted that closing programs was simple, but dismissing employees was always challenging. She stated, “It is always challenging when there is a disciplinary issue within the staff, when an inherent trust has been violated [by an employee]”.

Neil admitted he reverted to a top-down leadership approach when faced with organizational crises. His reversion would be regarded as a moment of weakness in comparison to the accepted norms propounded by servant leader theorists. For example, Autry (2004) suggests that abandoning servant leadership in times of crisis can set the wrong example. At the same time and perhaps to support Neil’s experience, Autry states he knows good servant leaders who have “sacrificed their values on the altar of crisis”, and they “justified returning to the old top-down command-control type of management” (p. 223). Autry would argue Neil’s experience suggests the difficulty associated with
practicing servant leadership. He suggests the most challenging time for servant leaders is to “stay course…in the face of crisis or failure” (p. 223)

The findings of this study are congruent with the servant leadership literature that suggests disciplining employees is the most cited challenge to effectual servant leadership. Prosser (2007) proffers triumphant servant leaders deal with hostile challenges decisively and swiftly to show they are ultimately responsible for leadership in the organization. According to Prosser, by acting swiftly and decisively,

Gives the servant leader an opportunity to show that he or she exercises overall leadership, and in the process the challenge can be used to strengthen the approach taken by the leader. It enables servant leaders to spend time explaining to those who genuinely misunderstand the issues, or understand the issues but question the key decisions that have been taken, the reasons for the course of action and how alternative courses of action were considered and dismissed. (p. 30)

In addition, Daria thought some employees had trouble taking her seriously as a practicing servant leader. Daria claimed older employees, especially older managers, accustomed to a transactional leadership style occasionally viewed her servant leadership practice as “huggy bear”. Daria perceived several of her employees did not understand her leadership style when she became a leader. However, she acknowledged that over the past year or so these skeptics started to take note of her leadership skills, some of which they had not seen nor heard about in the past. Daria thought her skeptics were starting to see value in her servant leadership approach, even though some of them still see her as a “push-over”.

Ebener (2010) views servant leadership as being too simplistic. However, Ebener adds that servant leadership is far from simple to practice as it involves “complex human interactions” (p. 26) unlike interactions typical of other leadership styles. Furthermore,
Ebener controverts the claims of servant leadership as being too soft. As he argued, “Servant leadership is not soft...it is much tougher to practice than command-and-control ruling” (p. 26). One participant in Alcala’s (2009) study claimed some of his teachers thought he was indecisive when he asked for teacher input and allowed increased participation in decision making. Some teachers complained he should be making the decisions himself. Alcala’s participant noted, “and you know you run into a problem like that because they say well you are wishy-washy…you’re not going to please them all, but they have a say” (p. 105). The reference by her employees to Trish’s servant leadership as “huggy bear” might suggest the way some of them saw her leadership style as similar to the way some of the teachers in Alcala’s study saw their principal’s leadership style.

**Recommendations**

Based on the literature reviewed for this study, the research findings as well as my experience, the following recommendations are offered as recommendations to help servant leaders in non-profit organizations foster the personal and professional growth and development of their employees.

1. Servant leaders reverting to a top-down managerial style, especially in times of crisis is a cause for concern. During moments of organizational uncertainty and crisis, servant leaders should maintain their servant leadership convictions (Autry, 2004). During such moments, servant leaders must demonstrate to skeptics the value of servant leadership through the efficient display of the servant leadership characteristics discussed in this study and elsewhere.
2. Unlike foresight, commitment to the growth of and development of the employees is a servant leadership characteristic that is learnable and can be developed over time through practice. Successful servant leaders in non-profit organizations can foster employee growth and development by creating a positive learning environment. The establishment of a positive learning environment should encompass a positive learning culture, and a positive learning transfer climate. Moreover, it is imperative that servant leaders consider their employees personal learning needs before their professional needs. Further, if the servant leaders wish to foster their employee`s learning needs, they should model learning for their employees.

3. Based on the perceptions of the participants, the ability to build community and enhance relationships with employees is a requisite for success as a servant leader. The participants cited building strong internal and external communities through the modelling of collaboration and commitment. Some examples they advocated involved modelling by being present as the leader, through interaction, openness, and action.

4. This study found servant leaders build on their practice as stewards. In addition, stewardship was the most cited servant leadership characteristic. Furthermore, the participants perceived their employees valuing their stewardship characteristic most, especially those seeking workplace-sponsored learning. Servant leaders in non-profit organizations can enhance their stewardship by affording employees access to organizational resources such as other employees and funding support, to accomplish their learning needs. Servant leaders can use
their networks, to connect employees with outside agencies, which can serve as a valuable resource for employee growth and development, especially in instances when such resources may not be available in their organizations.

5. Finally, servant leaders can cultivate employee personal and professional development by employing empathy in mentoring arrangements. As the participants in this study indicated, establishing a coaching relationship with employees as well as being an empathetic listener is likely to foster employee personal and professional growth and development.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

A case study that focuses on one of the six servant leaders could untangle the complex issues that foster the growth and development of their employees. Further, a broader and more comprehensive study involving various organization types and key stakeholder groups of those organizations, such as employees and community representatives, could provide a much deeper understanding of the ways servant leaders foster the growth and development of their employees. In addition, a comparative study of servant leaders in two or more organizations could provide further insightful information into servant leadership as well as how servant leaders foster employee growth and development. Finally, replicating the study on a province-wide or country-wide level using a combination of data collection methods could provide rich and important information on servant leadership and the way servant leaders foster employee growth and development.

Further exploration on how non-profit servant leaders foster employee personal and professional development could include conducting interviews with other practicing
non-profit servant leaders outside of Saskatchewan. A nation-wide study involving a larger population sample including an equal amount of male to female servant leaders might be helpful. Furthermore, exploration beyond human-service non-profit organizations would be necessary to see if any servant leaders exist within non-human service focus non-profit organizations (e.g. PETA). Future research could additionally be conducted on how a particular servant leadership characteristic as practiced by a non-profit servant leader contributes to their employees development; using this study’s findings of the four majority characteristics (commitment to the growth of people, stewardship, foresight/conceptualization, and community building) as the launch-pad for their study.

**Concluding Comments**

This study has addressed some of the gap in the available literature pertaining to servant leadership in non-profit organizations. The work explored the ways six servant leaders perceived how their practice of servant leadership fostered employee personal and professional development in non-profit organizations. Several conclusions were drawn from the data, which were gathered extensively from the participants. The research provided a much-needed deeper understanding of the four questions the study sought to investigate. As this study has shown, servant leaders can employ myriad variations of strategies to foster employee growth and development, and many of these strategies can be exemplified by exhibiting certain servant leadership characteristics.
REFERENCES


Flint, B. B. (2011). *The journey to competitive advantage through servant leadership: Building the company every person dreams of working for and every president has a vision of leading*. Bloomington, IN: Westbow Press.


APPENDIX A

Are you a Servant-Leader Questionnaire?

If you say yes to more than seven of these questions, then you are a servant leader:

1. Do people believe that you will understand what is happening in their lives and how it affects them?
2. Do people come to you when the chips are down or when something traumatic has happened in their lives?
3. Do others believe that you have a strong awareness for what is going on?
4. Do others follow your request because they want to as opposed to because they have to?
5. Do others communicate their ideas and vision for the organization when you are around?
6. Do others have confidence in your ability to anticipate the future and its consequences?
7. Do others believe you are preparing the organization to make a positive difference in the world?
8. Do people believe that you are committed to helping them develop and grow?
9. Do people feel a strong sense of community in the organization that you lead?
10. Do people believe that you are willing to sacrifice your own self interest for the good of the group?
11. Do people believe that you want to hear their ideas and will value them?
APPENDIX B

Online Interview Questions

1. Can you please name servant leadership characteristics that you identify with?
2. How do you think this characteristic influences your staff’s professional development? Personal development?
3. In what ways does your servant leadership style foster a learning environment in your non-profit workplace?
4. When conflicted with miniscule staff training and development budgets, how do you overcome this to contribute to the growth of your staff?
5. Can you please name another servant leadership characteristic that you identify with? And please outline how you think this servant leadership trait influences your staff’s personal and professional development?
6. Have any of your employees acknowledged your leadership as directly influencing their personal or professional growth? If yes, how did they portray you as doing so? What do you think they thought you did selflessly to help them grow?
7. Have you ever used mentoring of non-profit staff? If yes, how do you think your servant leadership style influenced that process?
8. Have you ever used coaching as a training and development tool when training staff? If yes, how do you think your servant leadership influenced that process?
9. Can you please name another servant leadership characteristic that you identify with? And please outline how you think this servant leadership trait influences your staff’s personal and professional development?
10. Have training and development budgets increased or decreased since you have been a servant leader in your current role?
11. Do you believe there is anything you could improve on as a servant leader to help support the growth of your staff more, and if so, how would you improve?
APPENDIX C

Follow-Up Interview Questions

1. Through your experiences as a mentor, what servant leadership characteristics do you find are informing your practice as mentor? What servant leadership characteristics inform your practice as a coach?
2. Can you give me an example of how you mentored one of your employees?
3. Can you give me an example of how you coached one of your employees?
4. In your practice as a servant-leader, is there an aspect of servant-leadership that you believe does not apply to you?
5. As a servant leader which moment, practice, or program are you most proud about that you used in the workplace to contribute to the development of employees?
6. What are the limiting factors about servant-leadership (the limitations), the challenges?
APPENDIX D

Consent Form

University of Regina
Faculty of Education

Re: Consent form

Thesis Title – Exploring how servant leaders foster employee development: a qualitative study of servant leaders in non-profit organizations

Contacts: Graduate Student Researcher:
Greg Prochnow
Thesis Advisor:
Dr. Ann Hackman
Faculty of Education, University of Regina
Ann.hackman@uregina.ca
306.337.4880

Purpose
The study aims to explore how non-profit leaders as servant leaders cultivate employee personal and professional development. In particular, the study will examine the best practices of Saskatchewan non-profit leaders as servant leaders in non-profit organizations for developing their staff.

Procedures
All non-profit leaders who have at least five years of leadership experience with a non-profit organization are invited to respond to this Letter of Invitation and sign the Consent Form; however, the study is limited to only six participants, and it is required that the leader identifies as being a servant-leader, and has practiced servant leadership for the past five years. Participation may involve completing minor written work e.g., a brief leadership philosophy. Keeping in mind, how did you contribute to their growth by being a servant-leader? A short follow-up interview may be requested if clarification is deemed necessary. Participants will have the opportunity to verify the accuracy of transcripts in the transcript review process expected to take no more than 30 minutes.

Risk
This study involves minimal risk to participants. Each interview will be conducted during a mutually agreed upon time, conducted in a safe, and appropriate, private space.

Confidentiality
To help ensure comments made during the interview are not attributable to particular individuals, interview transcripts will be provided to participants so that they can remove unintended comments prior to analysis. All requests for altering transcripts to maintain confidentiality will be completely respected. Further, pseudonym used in the final report will help conceal identities. Please note, however, that due to the small pool of eligible participants, others may infer the identities of participants from direct quotations that are used in the final report; as such, anonymity cannot be completely guaranteed. Please also be aware that exceptions regarding confidentiality must be made to meet legal requirements. All materials produced during the research process will be kept confidential, including computer files, audiotapes, and printed materials. Materials will be password protected or stored in secure areas accessible only to the researcher. If you do not require anonymity, please let me know here by checking marking the appropriate box.

Required anonymity ☐
I give permission to use my name, occupation (including title held by the participant, and employer). ☐

Voluntary Participation
Participation in the study is completely voluntary. Refusal to participate will have no negative consequences, and participants are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. Questions about the procedures and goals of this study may be address to the research or thesis advisor at the contact information.

Statement of Consent
My signature below indicates that I have read, understood, and received a copy of this consent form. I hereby freely consent to participate in this study with the understanding that I am free to withdraw at any time without consequence. I submit one signed copy of this form to the researcher and retain one copy for my own information.

(Please print name)

(Signature)
APPENDIX E

Letter of Invitation

To: Executive Director/Office Manager of [non-profit name]
From: Greg Procknow
Date: December 1st, 2011
Subject: Master’s Thesis Study

I am planning on conducting a qualitative study that explores the way servant leaders foster employee development in non-profit organizations. This study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the MIRRD program I am completing at the University of Regina. This letter is sent to all leaders (Executive Director, Provincial Director, etc.) of Saskatchewan non-profit organizations to inform them of the research, and to invite their participation in the study. Any non-profit leader with at least ten years experience working within an employee development capacity, who identifies as a Servant-Leader, and has done so for roughly the last five years is eligible to participate.

All research participants will be requested to participate in a tape-recorded face-to-face interview. The interviews will last for about 120 minutes. Further, the participants will be required to participate in a transcript review process, where they would be expected to confirm the accuracy of their interview data and provide any additional input if necessary. I expect this meeting for the transcript review process will last for about 30 minutes. Participation would involve answering questions in a confidential, tape-recorded interview (either in-person, or on the phone); or recorded through Skype conversations, lasting no longer than two hours. My questions would focus on the following: what is it that makes you a servant-leader? How is this reflected in your belief in continuous learning and development? What is it that you do to cultivate employee development (personally and professionally)?

At anytime you may choose not to participate, or withdraw your participation at any time without consequences. During the process you may direct any questions regarding your treatment or rights as research participants to the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at (306) 585-4401 or by e-mail at research.ethics@uregina.ca. As a potential participant in the study, you are invited to read further information on the attached consent form. If you would like to participate in the study, please complete the consent form and return to me through email, or mail it to me at the address marked above.

From the available pool of willing participants, I will randomly select six to participate. I have attached a quick ten question survey for you to answer simply ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to; if you answer yes to seven of the questions, you are eligible for the study. Any questions about the study may be directed to me for clarification, or to my thesis supervisor, whose name and contact information appears below.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Greg Procknow
gregprocknow@live.com

Thesis Supervisor:
Dr. Abu Bockarie, Abu.Bockarie@uregina.ca
Faculty of Education, University of Regina
APPENDIX F

Research Ethics Approval

DATE: December 20, 2011

TO: Greg Poucknow
1008 Roc Street
Regina, SK S4T 2R0

FROM: Dr. Bruce Plouffe
Chair, Research Ethics Board

Re: Exploring the Way Servant Leaders Foster Employee Development: A Qualitative Study of Servant Leaders in Nonprofit Organizations (File # 2591112)

Please be advised that the University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed your proposal and found it to be:

☐ 1. APPROVED AS SUBMITTED. Only applicants with this designation have ethical approval to proceed with their research as described in their applications. For research lasting more than one year (Section 1F), ETHICAL APPROVAL MUST BE RENEWED BY SUBMITTING A BRIEF STATUS REPORT EVERY TWELVE MONTHS. Approval will be revoked unless a satisfactory status report is received. Any substantive changes in methodology or instrumentation must also be approved prior to their implementation.

☐ 2. ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO MINOR CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the concerns to the Chair of the REB. ** Do not submit a new application. Once changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.

☐ 3. ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the concerns to the Chair of the REB. ** Do not submit a new application. Once changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.

☐ 4. UNACCEPTABLE AS SUBMITTED. The proposal requires substantial additions or redesign. Please contact the Chair of the REB for advice on how the project proposal might be revised.

Dr. Bruce Plouffe

Dr. Abu Bockarla - Education

** Supplementary memo should be forwarded to the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at the Office of Research Services (Research and Innovation Centre, Room 523) or by e-mail to research.ethics@uregina.ca

Phone: (306) 337-3475
Fax: (306) 347-4153