

# BUILDING TRUST THROUGH SERVANT LEADERSHIP

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MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE  
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by  
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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

**BUILDING TRUST THROUGH SERVANT LEADERSHIP**, by Major John Vickery, 76 pages.

Army Leadership doctrine directs leaders to build trust by upholding the Army values and exercising leadership consistent with the Army leadership principles outlined in the Army Leader Requirements Model. However, these are not pragmatic trust-building methods for leaders to implement in their units, thus potentially hindering the exercise of Mission Command.

This research exploits the relationships between the Army's leadership philosophy and Servant Leadership theory, and offers Servant Leadership as potential method to build mutual trust in Army units. Unlike traditional military leader approaches that focus on the goals of the organization, Servant Leaders prioritize the development of the individuals. Using the Servant Leadership models of lead researchers, experts, and practitioners, this thesis emphasizes a practical framework that might help leaders better build cohesive teams.

By inculcating the principles of Servant Leadership into leaders' personal leadership philosophy, they can set favorable conditions for subordinates to exercise valuable Mission Command. Evidence of this practice is found in several prominent military leaders, and they all have proven tremendously effective in building high performing teams that resulted in mission accomplishment.

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## ACRONYMS

ALRM	Army Leadership Requirements Model
SLTP	Servant Leadership: Theory and Practice



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Overview

In the age of a downsizing Army, coupled with increasingly complex challenges and operating requirements, finite resources and fewer Soldiers will inevitably force decentralized operations that demand steadfast trust from leaders at every level. However, most Soldiers would agree not every leader has been effective in building the trust necessary for optimal mission accomplishment. The Army's Mission Command doctrine, Army Doctrine Reference Publication 6-0, suggest commanders earn trust by upholding the Army values and exercising leadership consistent with Army leadership principals; however,<sup>1</sup> this doctrine fails to provide concrete methods for building and sustaining trust necessary for truly enabling subordinate leaders to make critical decisions at the point of action. Today more than ever presents an urgent need for an inculcation of trust within military formations. That said the Army is facing two unique challenges, both of which will demand a substantial level of trust to achieve the desired effects in the complex environment of today and in the future.

The first of the two issues is the overwhelming amount competing requirements deemed necessary for Continental United States and Outside Continental United States based operations. From the growing number of adversaries that threaten western security, to the flood of garrison-based tasks created by sequestration and downsizing, successfully meeting these challenges on multiple fronts will require drastic decentralization,

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<sup>1</sup> Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0, *Mission Command* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, March 2014), 2.

expecting leaders, many who are young and inexperienced, to make important decisions, often with limited to no guidance. The second, and potentially more important, is the issue of culture and climate. Many outspoken officers have questioned organizational trust when the bureaucracy and administrative nature of garrison takes up more time than training readiness.<sup>2</sup> The inundation of tasks and duties that bear no relation to a unit's Mission Essential Task List degrades the sense of purpose vital to build and sustain organizational trust. One former officer states "junior leaders are sick of administrative requirements imposed by regulation, and that it is somewhere between highly impractical and impossible to comply with the deluge of administrative requirements." He goes on to argue that "our officers, just like the rest of our troops, want to be training or fighting, not sitting at a computer making PowerPoint slides or wasting hours clicking through online training modules."<sup>3</sup> This culture of compliance potentially degrades the trust necessary to build confidence, competence, and commitment within the Army's leaders, and roadblocks success in complex and adverse conditions.

In another report, it is said there are 12 United States generals currently in Iraq involved in the fight against ISIS. However, only 5,000 troops are currently deployed to Iraq and Syria.<sup>4</sup> That means that there is roughly one general for every 416 Soldiers or Marines, a responsibility normally assumed by a lieutenant colonel. This account in

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<sup>2</sup> Tim Mathews, "Reframing the Military's Junior Officer Retention Problem," Task and Purpose, November 3, 2015, accessed November 14, 2015, <http://taskandpurpose.com/reframing-the-militarys-junior-officer-retention-problem/>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Nancy A. Youssef, "21 Generals Lead ISIS War the US Denies Fighting," *The Daily Beast*, March 31, 2016, accessed April 5, 2016, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/03/31/exclusive-21-generals-lead-an-isis-war-the-u-s-denies.html>.

particular seems to challenge senior leader trust and their belief in the philosophy of Mission Command.

Although not found in today's doctrine, Servant Leadership, a theory first developed by civilians may have the potential to enable the trust needed in ambiguous situations, allowing more efficient and successful operations in decentralized environments, instantaneously building confidence and adaptability within ground-force leaders. The challenges mentioned above lead to essence of this research. The purpose of this study is to discover the Servant Leadership phenomenon for building a level of trust that will truly enable leaders at all levels to operate decentralized now, and into the future.

Although many of the military's past and present leaders have published troves of documents about the importance of trust within Army, few have provided pragmatic methods of inculcating it into their formations, specifically the theory of Servant Leadership. This leads to the importance of this topic, that an urgency must be generated to revolutionize trust-building theories that enable true mission command in the challenges of the future. One potential way is to inculcate Servant Leadership into the Army's Leadership Philosophy.

The ground theory of Servant Leadership has been discussed by civilian academics and philosophers for decades, most notably by Robert Greenleaf. His philosophy is a set of practices that enriches the lives of individuals, builds better organizations, and ultimately creates a more just and caring world.<sup>5</sup> This civilian

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<sup>5</sup> Robert Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 13.

viewpoint can easily be translated to fit the Army profession to motivate Soldiers and stimulate leader development, promote teambuilding, prioritize the welfare of Soldiers, and improve the organization as a whole. A leader's role in this model is determining internal motivations of their Soldiers, and then supporting the Soldiers in achieving those goals. This idea has long been used, unintentionally, by many military leaders to ignite Soldiers' intrinsic motivation, maximizing unit potential. Furthermore, it advises that leaders must sometimes place themselves in a roll that supports subordinate efforts to accomplish assigned missions, simultaneously and indirectly building confidence and trust in junior leaders.

The literature review will disclose several aspects of the Army's leadership philosophy, specifically that of trust and Mission Command. The Literature Review is organized in a fashion that first defines and describes how building trust fits into the Army's leadership model, the importance of trust in building effective teams, and how trust relates to the philosophy of Mission Command. These subtopics primarily reference current Army doctrine and various other articles written by current and former Army officers. As expected, there is a tremendous amount of published information about his topic. The second portion of the Literature Review describes the theory of Servant Leadership. It explains in detail how it originated, the principals of Servant Leadership, how it has been effective in improving civilian organizations, and most importantly, how current practitioners are working to advance this theory in civil and governmental organizations. The last part of the Literature Review provides a brief synopsis of two military leaders that have implemented Servant Leadership to influence subordinates and build trust in their organizations. Colonel Ralph Puckett and Lieutenant General Lewis

“Chesty” Puller both exhibited traits of Servant Leadership that enabled trust to be established and strengthened within their commands. Chapter 4 will expand on their individual leadership styles and compare them with the principals of Servant Leadership. All three portions of the Literature Review are critical to the analysis of this research described in Chapter 4.

As mentioned in the opening paragraph, current Army doctrine, specifically Army Doctrine Publication 6-22 (*Army Leadership*) and Army Doctrine Publication 6-0 (*Mission Command*), fails to provide pragmatic methods to build and sustain trust within Army formations. It does provide several charts, such as the Army Leadership Requirements Model (ALRM), illustrated in chapter 2. However, these are merely intangible bullet points, declaring that if leaders possess these attributes and characteristics, then they will be successful. Audiences will benefit from this research by gaining a deep understanding of how and why Servant Leadership is a tremendously effective method to build and sustain trust. Additionally, readers will see how military leaders in the past have used this theory generate indisputable, positive results, on and off the battlefield.

As previously mentioned, the purpose of this grounded theory study is to discover the Servant Leadership phenomenon for building trust that enable them to operate decentralized in future conflicts. By examining the dynamics of trust, and the concept of Servant Leadership, and examples of Servant Leadership implemented by previous commanders, we can better understand the conceptions and misconceptions about trust building methods in the Army. With this understanding, leaders and commanders at all

levels can build stronger teams based on mutual trust, capable of operating in difficult conditions.

### Primary Research Question

Is Servant Leadership a practical and effective method to build the trust necessary that enable units to operate decentralized in future and uncertain environments?

### Secondary Research Questions:

1. How does trust impact organizational culture and unit operating potential?
2. What is Servant Leadership and how is it useful to build trust in organizations?
3. What is the relationship between the Servant Leadership principles and the Army's leadership philosophy and Mission Command? Are they interchangeable?
4. How has Servant Leadership been implemented by military leaders? Was it successful?

### Assumptions

The following assumptions are believed to remain true and add relevance to the research project. That the Army will continue to downsize until it reaches the target of 420,000 troops. The Army's administrative requirements will either remain at their current level, or increase with time caused by decreasing Soldiers and resources. Additionally, the Army will remain committed to conducting operations in Afghanistan,

based on President Obama's comments made on October 15, 2015.<sup>6</sup> The final assumption is that the Army will continue to be engaged in deterring aggression from countries such as Russia, China, and North Korea; and fight against non-state entities such as Islamic State extremists, Al Qaeda, and its affiliates.

### Definitions

Command Climate: Command Climate is described as the characteristic atmosphere in which people work. It is directly attributable to the leader's values, skills, and actions.<sup>7</sup>

Mission Command: Mission Command is the exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within the commander's intent to empower agile and adaptive leaders in the conduct of unified land operations.<sup>8</sup> According to Army Doctrine Publication 6-0, mission command doctrine incorporates three ideas: the exercise of mission command, the mission command philosophy, and the mission command warfighting function. For this research, the "exercise of mission command" refers to the overarching idea that unifies the mission command philosophy of command and the mission command warfighting function.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Barack Obama, "Barack Obama Comments on OEF," The White House, October 15, 2015, accessed December 9, 2015, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/10/15/statement-president-afghanistan>.

<sup>7</sup> Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6, *Mission Command* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, March 2014), 2-12.

<sup>8</sup> Department of the Army, ADP 6-0, 1.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.



Organizational Climate: Organizational climate consists of collective perceptions of the work environment shared by members of the organization.<sup>10</sup>

Organizational Culture: Organizational culture is the shared beliefs of a group used to solve problems and manage internal anxiety.<sup>11</sup>

Trust: There are many definitions of trust; however, for the purpose of this research, trust will be defined in two ways. First, the Army defines trust as the assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something.<sup>12</sup> Mutual trust is shared confidence among commanders, subordinates, and partners.<sup>13</sup> The second definition is provided by J. I. Harris of the consulting firm, Harris and Associates, in which he states the virtue of trust has been linked to integrity, respect for others, and service to their organization.<sup>14</sup>

### Limitations

The constraint of time is the main limitation of the study, which will in turn limit the amount of research conducted. This is particularly important in recognizing that there is a vast amount of published information on the topic of trust, Mission Command, and

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<sup>10</sup> Carey W. Walker and Robert J. Rielly, “Myth Busting: Coming to Grips with Organizational Culture and Climate” (L104RA, Command and General Staff School, Fort Leavenworth, KS, Curriculum 2015), 3.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>12</sup> Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 1, *The Army* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, March 2014), 2-2.

<sup>13</sup> Department of the Army, ADP 6-0, 2.

<sup>14</sup> Kathleen Patterson, “Servant Leadership: A Theoretical Model” (Servant Leadership Research Roundtable, School of Leadership Studies, Regent University, August 2003), 5.

Servant Leadership. However, much of the research time was spent collecting information on Servant Leadership. Additionally, this study is qualitative in nature. Quantitative data collection would require more time across multiple formations to achieve accurate results.

### Conclusion

This study ultimately explores the general idea of Servant Leadership, and that in order to achieve a climate based on mutual trust, both leaders and subordinates have a responsibility to demonstrate their character, validate their competence, and exhibit their commitment, as part of the organizational culture. In doing so, leaders can leverage the principals of Servant Leadership to set favorable conditions for subordinates to exercise disciplined initiative and earning increased responsibility and authority. Furthermore, leaders do this through leader development, empowering subordinates, setting the example, and taking prudent risks, all tenets of Servant Leadership. The literature review will focus on the following areas: clarification of the terms culture and climate, the definition of trust and its relationship to the Army profession, detailed research on the topic of Servant Leadership, and an examination of Colonel Puckett and Lieutenant General Puller, both who used Servant Leadership to build trust in their units. An explanation of the methodology used in the research will be described in chapter 3. Chapter 4 will discuss the findings of the study and outline effective methods of building and sustaining organizational trust. The final chapter will contain the conclusion and recommendations for future research in implementing Servant Leadership into Army doctrine to build and sustain trust in Army units.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Building Trust and Building Teams

In an interview with the Army Times, former Army Chief of Staff General Ray Odierno stated “Whether you’re a lieutenant, whether you’re a captain, whether you’re a 4-star general, you have to constantly earn [Soldiers’] trust, and they don’t ask for a whole lot. What they want you to do is be true to your word. They want to know you will fight for them when necessary. They want to know you will make the hard, tough decisions when necessary, whether it be in combat or not. That’s what they expect from you.”<sup>15</sup> To provide more gravity to this statement, one Army Colonel states that trust can move an organization forward or completely stop it. It has the ability to make or break a unit.<sup>16</sup>

A successful command simply cannot exist without trust, and developing and sustaining trust takes time, must be intentional, and must be a daily priority in every leader’s mind. Just as the Army Values of Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage should be incorporated into every action Soldiers take, trust is what fosters all of them. More specifically, when trust is absent, leaders, or

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<sup>15</sup> Raymond Odierno, “Trust: The DNA of Leadership,” *The Army Medical Department Journal* (July-September 2013): 33.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

Soldiers for that matter, cannot expect each other to uphold the Army Values. Simply put, if the unit has lost trust in its leaders, the leader has lost the ability to lead.<sup>17</sup>

While understanding trust, and even the importance of it, seems straightforward, earning it can be extremely challenging, especially with other competing objectives. With this challenge facing almost every Army leader, one must seek ways to build trust into every action taken by the organization and its leaders. Additionally, depending on the operational environment and the current state of the organizational culture and climate, earning trust may be quick or take a substantial amount of time.

In his recent command experience, Colonel Eric Sones identified four key elements vital to building organizational trust. They are confidence in the command, reliability, empowering others, and care for others. He articulates each of these in further detail.

Confidence in the command can be further broken down into two subcategories: Subordinates' confidence their leaders, and leader's self-confidence. Soldiers depend on their leaders not only to make the right decisions, but also to prioritize their welfare about the leader's own self-interest. The military's most effective leaders recognize and practice the idea that the mission is far bigger than any one individuals, especially themselves. Good leaders demonstrate self-confidence as well. They do this by openly exhibiting their proficiency in MOS skills, their decisiveness in making tough decisions, and their fearless ability to lead. The polar opposite of this is toxic leadership.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Eric Sones, "Trust: The DNA of Leadership," *The Army Medical Department Journal* (July-September 2013): 34.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

Reliability is the second element of Colonel Eric Sones' tenets of building trust. He argues that trust is built simply by ensuring that words are followed with the appropriate action. If Soldiers consistently observe their leaders saying and doing the right things, trust is being built.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the contrary is true as well. If you fail to follow up words with action, trust is lost. The other key word in the aspect of keeping ones' word is consistency. Because trust is not built in a single event, words and actions must consistently be observed by everyone on the team. In addition to consistency, a leader's reliability is often galvanized when they are open and honest about making mistakes. This proves to the group that open communication is encouraged with all members of the unit.<sup>20</sup> This reliability is what creates a culture of trust up and down the chain of command.

The third element of Sones' trust paradigm is to empower others. Limiting subordinates' authorities, or as Sones calls it, micromanagement, degrades the trust within any organization.<sup>21</sup> When junior leaders do not have the power to make decisions or take action, they feel as if their leadership does not trust them. Furthermore, micromanagement prevents creative and critical thinking, and does not allow people to take prudent risks. Of course, more mistakes will be made by allowing subordinates to take more risks. However, Sones argues that making mistakes is often where people learn the most.<sup>22</sup> Thus, to enable a culture of learning, leaders are pressed to empower others.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

Lastly, when leaders empower others, it allows subordinates opportunities to demonstrate their abilities, ideas, and competence. This alone is a tremendous trust builder, thus enabling operations to be more decentralized and more tasks to be accomplished.

Caring for others is the last, and perhaps the most important aspect, of Sones' trust building philosophy. Genuine care for Soldiers is the doorway to any trusting relationship, thus trust is built by learning, understanding, and meeting the needs of those being led. This element to building trust is best articulated by Sones who states, "A selfless leader is willing to risk his or her fortune in order to do what is right for the Soldier. Self-serving, forceful leadership destroys trust while a caring, selfless leader builds it."<sup>23</sup>

Sones' four elements of building trust are all important; however, sincerely listening to your Soldiers must be done before all. Dr. Bill Holton, an acclaimed author of multiple books on metaphysics and spiritual growth, declares that listening to ones' subordinates should be one of a manager's highest priorities. When one speaks less, they are often saying more. He goes on to say leaders should listen carefully so they can be open to unhindered awareness. Part of this awareness described by Holton allows leaders to be cognizant of what is really happening around them, notice the nuances of the situation, and the subtleties of experience.<sup>24</sup> After all, leaders will not learn if they do not listen to those around them.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ralph Puckett, *Words for Warriors: A Professional Soldier's Notebook* (Tucson: Wheatmark, 2007), 197.

Lastly, Colonel Puckett emphasizes the importance of truly listening to your Soldiers. He states that what Soldiers are sometimes saying may not be what they are actually thinking. For units, and Soldiers for that matter, to maximize their potential, Soldiers must be relaxed enough to say what they really mean. This will prove open and honest communication between leaders and subordinates, thus exposing talent and ability that leaders may not realize, is in their organizations.<sup>25</sup>

In sum, the ability to gain and maintain trust within an organization is essential to building a team. As one successful colonel has articulated, establishing trust vial to building effective teams requires confidence in the command, reliability, empowering others, and caring for others.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, before all, leaders must be willing to listen sincerely to the needs of their followers, understanding their individual needs and goals that will inspire them to maximize their potential for the good of the organization.

### Trust and the Army's Leadership Philosophy

The Army's Leader Development doctrine, Field Manual 6-22, describes the representation of its leaders as one who inspires and influences people to accomplish organizational goals. Furthermore, it defines the act of leading as a process in which Soldiers of assigned or assumed responsibility provides purpose, direction and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization.<sup>27</sup> With this portrayal in mind, the Army has delineated what it expects from all of its leaders illustrated through the

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 199.

<sup>26</sup> Sones, "Trust: The DNA of Leadership," 34.

<sup>27</sup> Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 6-22, *Leader Development* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, June 2015), 1-13.

ALRM (figure 1). This model comprises the internal characteristics of a leader, and what the Army wants its leaders at all levels to “be, know, and do,” and it is further divided up into a set of attributes and competencies.<sup>28</sup> Of specific reference, building trust is a key component of leading within the competencies portion of the model; an area that doctrine states leaders should acquire, demonstrate, and continue to enhance. This area of competency requires a more thorough look.

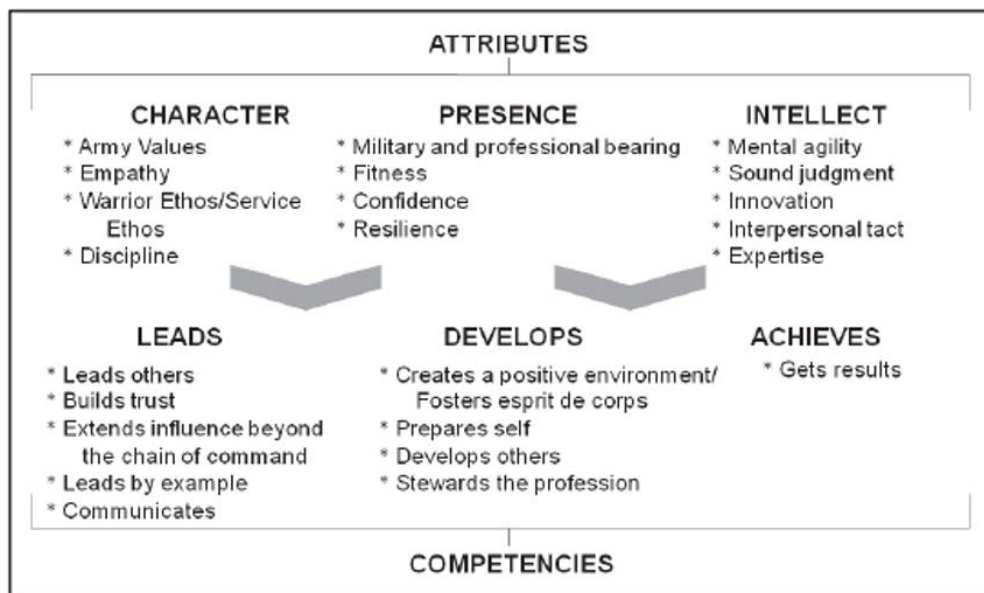


Figure 1. Army Leadership Requirements Model

Source: Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-22, *Army Leadership* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, August 2012), 1-5.

The category of “Leads” includes five sub-skills: Leads others, builds trust, extends influence beyond the chain of command, leads by example, and communicates. Leads others and extending influence beyond the chain of command are both affiliated

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 22.



with the followers in the organization and briefly described earlier. However, the concept of building trust is a more complex theory. Doctrine states building trust is critical to establishing the conditions necessary for effective influence and creating a positive environment. Additionally, this competency has a close relationship with the last two, which are leading by example and communication. Finally, it must be noted that a leader's influence often requires insightful and possibly nonstandard methods of influencing others, and that leaders may have little time to assess the situation beforehand, thus requiring them to adapt as the interaction with subordinates evolves.

In addition to the Leadership Requirements Model, the field manual on *Leader Development*, Field Manual 6-22, provides more details on building trust. To create a climate of trust, leaders are expected to overtly display regularity in their daily actions with respect to their behavior in coaching, counseling, and mentoring. The components of this particular competency are setting a personal example of trust, taking direct actions for building trust, and sustaining a climate of trust within the organization.

First, leaders are expected to set a personal example of trust. For instance, leaders should follow through with commitments and promises, always be truthful even if unpopular, and openly admit mistakes. Setting a personal example inspires those around the leader to act in the same manner. These actions will communicate, verbally and nonverbally, the values held internally by the leader and the unit they represent. Setting a personal example of trust should ideally be consistent and is arguably the most powerful tool a leader has to shape the culture and climate of the unit.<sup>29</sup> Indicators that a leader is not setting an example of trust are, but are not limited to, making unrealistic

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<sup>29</sup> Department of the Army, FM 6-22, 7-16.

commitments, blaming others for their mistakes, or engaging in action inconsistent with their words.

The second component articulated by Field Manual 6-22 is to take direct actions for building trust within the organization. To do this, leaders should develop others through mentoring, coaching, and counseling. These sessions should communicate confidence in the subordinate to continue their great work, or providing positive, and constructive response to their deficiencies. This interaction sends clear messages that the leaders have trust and confidence not only in their subordinates, but also in the organization as a whole. Also within this construct, leaders are to demonstrate care for others, empower subordinates in their actions towards meeting objectives, and identifying commonality that builds upon shared experiences. A few indicators that leaders are failing in this realm are social anxiety or the fear of failing in front of others, focusing too much on one's own ambitions, or a general lack of self-confidence.<sup>30</sup>

The third and final component of the trust-building competency is to sustain a climate of trust within the organization. In doing this, leaders are charged with establishing an organizational culture that is mutually beneficial to everyone within the unit. Additionally, this culture should promote a climate of openness and risk-tolerance. To sustain this culture of trust, leaders must constantly exhibit the norms, behaviors and values that are viewed as important to the unit's identity. Furthermore, overt action must be taken for conduct that goes against these values to show they will not be tolerated. Lastly, it must be reemphasized that the first two components, setting a proper example and directing action to build trust, are vital to sustaining a long-term climate of trust.

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<sup>30</sup> Department of the Army, FM 6-22, 7-17.

Indicators of strength in this area are the continuance of communicating unit goals and objectives, under-promising and over-delivering, and maintaining high unit morale.<sup>31</sup>

To summarize how trust fits into the Army's Leadership Philosophy, trust is the bedrock in which an organizational culture is formed, ultimately determining the climate of the unit. If the norms, beliefs and values are built on a foundation of mutual trust, a climate of openness, empowerment, and confidence will develop. Additionally, once the culture is created, leaders must then maintain the climate of trust through their example, influence beyond the chain of command, and promoting continuous open communication. On the contrary, if the culture is based on compliance, strict directives, and questionable examples, then the unit's climate will hinder growth, adaptability, and decision-making.

#### Trust and Mission Command

According to Army Doctrine Reference Publication 6-0, *Mission Command*, describes six distinct principals, one of which is building cohesive teams through mutual trust. The remaining five principals, creating a shared understanding, providing clear commander's intent, exercising disciplined initiative, using mission orders, and accepting prudent risks can only be executed if mutual trust has been established. To do this, leaders at all levels must first realize that trust is gained or lost through everyday actions.<sup>32</sup> As described earlier in this chapter, subordinates are constantly observing the words and deeds of their superiors, thus either strengthening or degrading the trust bond

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 7-18.

<sup>32</sup> Department of the Army, ADRP 6-0, 2.

between the two. Additionally, leaders and subordinates must have effective two-way communication to enable effective mission command to take place.

As real trust is being established throughout the chain of command, the basis of unity of effort is being formed. This unity of effort, combined with effective two-way communication enables the second principal of Mission Command, which is creating a shared understanding of the environment in which the unit is operating, Soldiers' purpose, and the approaches to solving the problems within that environment. Upon ensuring a shared understanding among all involved, the commander provides clear intent to what needs to be accomplished. If trust has already been established, commanders empower subordinates to determine how to accomplish the mission. This leads to the fourth principal of Mission Command, exercise disciplined initiative. Simply put, disciplined initiative is taking the appropriate action in the absence of orders.

Experienced leaders realize that in a complex operating environment, they cannot be in every place at all times. Because of this, they must empower junior leaders to make decisions at the point of action, often under stressful circumstances. Again, if mutual trust has been established, commanders encourage subordinates to take the appropriate action within their previously published intent. The use of mission orders allows commanders to provide rapid directives that emphasize the results to be accomplished, not how to accomplish them.<sup>33</sup> The trust within the organization not only ensures the commander that the endstate will be met, but also holds subordinates accountable to the unit, their leaders, and their peers. The last principal of mission command is accepting prudent risks. As described earlier in this chapter as part of Sones trust building paradigm, leaders

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<sup>33</sup> Department of the Army, ADRP 6-0, 5.

must empower others to accept prudent risks. Effective commanders realize that uncertainty exists within all military operations, and not all risks can be avoided. Furthermore, establishing an honest trust bond is the precursor to enabling critical and creative thinking, and taking prudent risks.

### The Philosophy of Servant-Leadership

Robert Greenleaf has been the lead researcher on the subject of Servant-Leadership. He first published his seminal essays, *The Servant as Leader* and *The Institution as Servant*, in the early 1970s. He articulates a philosophy defined as a set of practices that enriches the lives of individuals, builds better organizations and ultimately creates a more just and caring world.<sup>34</sup> To understand Greenleaf's viewpoint in more detail, one must understand the potential and paradox of his theory. In previous generations, many leadership activists focused primarily on advancing the goals of themselves and the privileged few motivated by promotion, attention, finances and the like. This idea was challenged when Greenleaf proclaimed the consideration and needs of others and the less privileged. He argued that a "good, just and desirable society"<sup>35</sup> depends upon leaders who care.

He titled one of his essays *The Servant as Leader* not *The Leader as Servant*; hence, Servant-Leadership is not simply selfless service. He thereby called upon people who are "natural servants" to actively participate in leading organizations and institutions

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<sup>34</sup> Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, 13.

<sup>35</sup> Larry C. Spears and George San Facon, "Holistic Servant Leadership," *The Servant Leadership Series*, Booklet 13 (June 2008): 3.

on behalf of the common good. Greenleaf further explains his theory that the leader is a servant first, with an aspiration to lead that follows. In contrast, the one who seeks to be the leader first is often driven by the attainment of power or materialistic motives. In comparison, both of these leadership types, servant-first and leader-first, are opposites. Greenleaf also states that between the ends of that spectrum of selflessness and selfishness are blends of middle ground. Between them are “shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature.”<sup>36</sup> The true difference between the two extreme types can be determined in a single question: Did those served grow because of the leader’s efforts and priorities? Furthermore, did those being served become healthier, wiser, more autonomous, and more likely to serve other in the future? Will they benefit as a result from the leaders service?<sup>37</sup> If the answer is yes, then servant-leadership is present.

Greenleaf goes on to proclaim that a servant-leader emphasizes the growth and welfare of the organization’s people, and the communities in which they belong. On the contrary, conventional leadership generally involves exercising top-down power and influence. The servant-leader delegates their authority, empowering subordinates, and overtly placing the needs of others first, helping people develop and perform as efficiently as possible. Greenleaf recognized that organizations as well as individuals could be servant-leaders. Indeed, he had great faith that servant-leader organizations could change the world.

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<sup>36</sup> Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, 13.

<sup>37</sup> Spears and San Facon, “Holistic Servant Leadership,” 4.

According to Larry Spears, a scholar of Greenleaf's Servant-Leadership philosophy, the servant as the leader encourages a better approach to leadership; one that puts serving others first. He encouraged those in formal leadership positions to ask themselves two questions: "Whom do you serve?" and "For what purpose?" He also promoted the idea that leaders should take a more holistic approach to work by encouraging a sense of community, and to empower subordinates in decision-making.<sup>38</sup> This notion was further described by Greenleaf in 1964 after founding The Center for Applied Ethics.

Greenleaf viewed ethics as a conduit for positive leadership and better organizations. According to ethicists, moral reasoning requires three distinct dimensions—motives, means, and ends. Motives are about one's intentions. Means refers to the methods or how we go about doing something, and ends denotes the outcomes. Spears describes this paradox in more detail. As one grows into personhood, we tend to develop more genuine consideration and concern for others. Not that we care less about ourselves, but we become increasingly committed to bettering the lives of others. Whether we are leading or following, intentions to serve grow with time. This natural human intention is the heart of servant-leadership. Obviously, everyone lands at a different place on the spectrum of caring, but, this impulse is where the real change happens where we call upon ourselves to care. Nevertheless, we are called upon to serve ourselves, our loved ones, our neighbors, and in the case of the Army, our subordinates.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 6.

While motives and intentions relates to the source drive for taking action as a servant, means, or methods, is how this drive is expressed in the world, or in this case, the tactical formation. Greenleaf divides this expression into two categories: (1) ways of being, and (2) institutional systems. In the first category, there are ways that servant leaders engage the environment around them. They include, but are not limited to awareness, presence, availability, empathy, generosity, foresight, and transparency. Using these qualities, servant leaders are able to implement them in key roles to influence those around them and improve the organization. In the latter category, which focuses on organizational framework, Greenleaf urges leaders to ensure effective, institutional systems are in place for efficient functioning of the establishment. Understating this is important because systems are powerful containers for the human experience, and they shape the life that is poured into them. To paraphrase one management guru, “Workers work in systems, leaders work on systems.”<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, Greenleaf highlighted the system of organization, what he referred to as “people and structure”<sup>41</sup>, as fundamental to better leadership. This so-called “structure” relates to how authorities are delegated throughout the organization. Therefore, it is the “metasystem”<sup>42</sup> for which all other systems are controlled and facilitated. To summarize the second category, it is a two-fold process of transformation, self and system, which defines the servant-leader.

The third dimension of moral reasoning is ends and outcomes. While conventional leadership has brought unparalleled success to some, it has marginalized

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<sup>40</sup> Spears and San Facon, “Holistic Servant Leadership,” 6.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.



many of those who worked to bring success to the boss. This final dimension simply calls servant-leaders to achieve moral symmetry by balancing the legitimate needs of all those affected by the organization.

Servant Leadership: Theory, Practice,  
and Healthy Organizations

Led by Dr. Phil Bryant, the D. Abbott Turner, College of Business at Columbus State University publishes a bi-annual online journal titled *Servant Leadership: Theory and Practice (SLTP)*. Aimed at advancing servant leadership, both as a field of academic study and as a management practice, this team of scholars, along with many contributors, have offered a tremendous amount of insight on the topic of Servant Leadership. From promoting its practice, to refining its definition, to publishing countless scientific-based evidence on the value of its implementation, *SLTP* generates a substantial argument, on not only the importance of integrating Servant Leadership in to the workplace, but also when it is best applicable.

In the first publicized issue in 2014, Bryant and Dr. Steven Brown, an associate editor, compare and contrast the enthusiasts and the skeptics of *SLTP*, ultimately offering a blended view on how to advance this particular theory. The skeptics often view Servant Leadership as already being practiced, and just another term for Ethical Leadership, Transformational Leadership, or just plain good leadership. Others question that if Servant Leadership is even a legitimate means towards meeting organizational goals. They claim that its practice may be useful in non-profit organizations or in the religious

arena; however, not in the highly competitive corporate world.<sup>43</sup> Again, skeptics are on one end of this spectrum. On the other hand, enthusiasts of Servant Leadership are quick to claim proof of its value, only because it simply corroborates, or gives name to their individual way of leading. However, many of these enthusiasts do not really offer any measurable evidence of exactly how their organization has benefited from it.

As for Bryant and Brown, they, along with their co-authors of *SLTP*, take an honest position somewhere in the middle between the skeptics and enthusiast. From this point of view, and considering their overall mission stated above, they have worked to not only legitimize the theory of Servant Leadership, but also to develop it as a viable style. To expand upon this, it has been narrowed down to three basic elements;

1. creating a consensus on the definition of Servant Leadership,
2. providing more and multiple types of evidence that the practice is useful, and
3. building upon that evidence to inform additional research.

Brown and Bryant encourage leaders, managers, and academics alike to converge on a more refined definition of Servant Leadership. Of course, there are many that have described the characteristics and practice of Servant Leadership such as Greenleaf and Spears, both highlighted earlier in this chapter; however, neither offer clear definitions like how the Army defines its current leadership style.

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<sup>43</sup> Phillip Bryant, “Enthusiastic Skepticism: The Role of SLTP in advancing Servant Leadership,” *Servant Leadership: Theory and Practice* 1, no. 1 (August 2014): 7.

As a starting point, Dr. Jim Laub, creator of the Organizational Leadership Assessment,<sup>44</sup> has defined Servant Leadership as “an understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader”. His definition is expanded by stating, “Servant leadership promotes the valuing and development of people, the building of community, the practice of authenticity, the providing of leadership for the good of those led and the sharing of power and status for the common good of each individual, the total organization and those served by the organization.”<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, Laub claims that as a result of effective Servant Leadership, the people who make up the team accept the leadership style being practices and recognize that it is to their benefit. Laub calls this “a Healthy Organization”. A healthy organization exhibits a culture that puts the needs of others first, and it is through that in which it gains strength and power. In addition to a unique culture, a Healthy Organization has six key functions described by Laub’s Organizational Leadership Assessment Group: Values People, Provides Leadership, Shares Leadership, Builds Community, Develops People, and Displays Authenticity. The Organizational Leadership Assessment Group describes these six key functions in detail.<sup>46</sup>

A healthy organization values its people. Arguably, everyone has a natural ability to know whether they are valued and trusted or not. Effective leaders offer their trust to

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<sup>44</sup> James A. Laub, “Defining Servant Leadership and the Healthy Organization,” The Organizational Leadership Assessment Group, March 1998, accessed March 13, 2016, <http://www.olagroup.com/Display.asp?Page=jimlaub>.

<sup>45</sup> Bryant, “Enthusiastic Skepticism,” 8.

<sup>46</sup> Laub, “Defining Servant Leadership and the Healthy Organization.”

their subordinates up front; they do not have to earn it. As leaders work with the people in the organization, they serve them by displaying the qualities of trust and Valuing People.

A healthy organization provides leadership. In Laub's model, leadership is described as initiative, influence, and impact. These leaders envision the future, take initiative, and clarify goals. These tenets are not driven by personal ambition, but by feeling a strong calling to serve the needs of others. They are future oriented. They are constantly determining "what could be" and "what should be." Lastly, they are clear on their desired goals. They use clear and concise language and communication to direct the organization on its shared vision of the future, then empower subordinates to get there.

A healthy organization shares leadership, vision, power and status. It recognizes that not all the power and authority lies with the most senior leader, and that the power must be delegated to maximize efficiency within the team. The subordinates must possess the ability to act, allocate resources, make decisions, and move a project forward without fear of reprisal. The people in the team not only share a vision, those people are part of its formulation, ultimately generating more subordinate buy-in. These functions expand the trust to multiple individuals, increasing the potential influence and impact on the entire organization. Lastly, leaders in Healthy Organizations subconsciously recognize that leadership is not a position or prestige. They resist accepting rewards and special attention because of their title. Instead, they frequently recognize everyone in the organization for their value, and promote their growth.

A healthy organization builds community. They build and maintain relationships, create collaboration, and value differences. Best described by Laub, "they resist the tendency to just get the job done." Conversely, they are more concerned with the

relationships of the people on the team. The leaders emphasize this intentionally because they know that subordinates will be better influenced by relationships than by the accomplishment of the tasks. Lastly, team members value disagreement and differences. They openly acknowledge their individual biases and boldly confront them by accepting different points of view from other of different background, cultures, and experiences.

A healthy organization develops people. Servant Leaders have a natural tendency and self-imposed responsibility to develop those around them. Where some styles of leadership punish mistakes, leaders in healthy organizations use these opportunities to develop growth. In addition to fostering a learning environment, they model appropriate behavior. They do not simply direct others to execute tasks, they set the example, perform the task first, and allow subordinates to emulate their standard. Lastly, as they develop their people, leaders build them up through affirmation. They openly recognize accomplishments and creativity, and use their success as a model for others to follow.

A healthy organization displays authenticity. Leaders in these organizations are open, accessible, and self-accountable. Furthermore, they encourage dialogue and feedback, and have a strong sense of honesty and integrity. They admit when they make mistakes, and recognize that they are not only accountable to those over them, but their subordinates as well. They recognize that learning never stops. They ask questions and sincerely consider answers before taking action. Lastly, people in healthy organizations realize that they can trust what is said, and words actually relate to actions.

All of these characteristics of a healthy organization, have derived from a culture develop by a Servant Leader. They are genuinely valued and practiced by the members of the team, simply due to a high level of trust, all initiated by the action of the servant.

Dr. Bryant's second point is that Servant Leadership needs more evidence that the practice is useful, and valuable to different types of organizations. He highlights several instances where authors have provided anecdotal evidence and personal experiences; however, he contends that in order to expand the field of Servant Leadership, his staff is aimed at publishing qualitative and theoretical work. In considering this perspective, Dr. Kathleen Patterson, director of the Strategic Leadership Program at Regent University, and Servant Leadership expert, has developed a Theoretical Model of Servant Leadership. Her theory is defined along the virtues of love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service. The following provides some background and details of each one of these virtuous constructs.

Love is the cornerstone of Servant Leadership, specifically *Agapao* Love. The Greek word for moral love, *Agapao* Love is to do the right thing, at the right time, for the right reasons. Furthermore, it includes embracing the judgment and the deliberate assent of the will as a matter of principle, duty, and propriety."<sup>47</sup> From a leadership standpoint, *Agapao* Love is demonstrated when leaders have such love for their subordinates that they focus on their employees first, their talents second, and how they can benefit the organization last. Patterson also states that leaders who demonstrate *Agapao* Love foster understanding, gratitude, kindness, forgiveness, and compassion. They genuinely appreciate their followers and care for the organization's people. Lastly, leaders who exhibit *Agapao* Love are real without pretense, show appreciation, celebrate milestones of their subordinates, actively listen, and are empathic.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Patterson, "Servant Leadership," 3.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

The second construct in Patterson's Theoretical Model is humility. She defines humility in this regard as "the non-overestimation of one's own merits," which is fitting for Servant Leaders who naturally value their subordinates over themselves. Furthermore, this virtue does not allow the leaders to think of themselves as superior to others in the organization. Therefore, it includes a level of self-acceptance, the avoidance of self-focus and rejecting self-glorification. Patterson declares that humility is critical for Chief Executive Officers and top leaders as it enables them to take recommendations from others, further strengthening the trust bond within the organization. Lastly, humility allows servant leaders to be vulnerable, openly receive criticism in order to better serve and build consensus with their followers.

The third virtue is that Servant Leaders are altruistic. Possessing a tendency to help others, regardless of the personal sacrifice involved, leaders with an altruistic nature gain pleasure in helping others succeed. Patterson states that an altruistic approach is imperative to a leadership mentality.<sup>49</sup>

The fourth virtue in Patterson's Theoretical Model is vision. Vision is usually thought of being the organization's vision, or the leader's vision of the future and how the organization fits into that. Concerning the Servant Leadership Theoretical Model, vision refers to the leader's recognition of their subordinates' potential and how they can be developed to meet personal goals in the future. Furthermore, the leader views their subordinates in terms of what they want to be, instead of what the leader needs them to be. This goes back to Greenleaf's "best test," determining whether the people in the organization grow from exposure to the leader? Servant Leaders must effectively, and

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<sup>49</sup> Patterson, "Servant Leadership," 4.

frequently, communicate with subordinates to understand what their personal goals are, and how they can be developed to achieve them. Additionally, Servant Leaders provide genuine stewardship to assist their subordinates in meeting these objectives. To achieve this, senior leaders must cultivate an environment that encourages this practice throughout all levels of management in organizations. Finally, Patterson best concludes the virtue of Servant Leader vision by stating, “Servant leaders enrich lives, build better human beings, and encourage people to become more than they ever believed, and that this is more than a job; this deep-rooted leadership is about mission, the mission to serve.”<sup>50</sup>

The fifth construct is trust. A buzzword of the Army’s current culture, trust will be studied in the following three sections of this chapter. For the purposes of Patterson’s Theoretical Model, trust is linked to integrity, respect for others, and service to the organization. Also, it is an essential element of relationship building and the strength of the organizational culture. Just as in many types of leadership, trust is the building block of Servant Leadership. This is largely due to the fact that Servant Leaders trust others to produce an expectation of exceeding standards within the whole organization. Patterson goes on to explain that trust in Servant Leadership nurtures teamwork, confidence, and self-esteem among followers. Finally, it builds an environment of allowing truth and encourage communication up and down the chain of command, where followers can express concern openly without fear of reprisal.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 6.



The sixth virtue of Patterson's Theoretical Model is empowerment. In this arena, empowerment is argued as among the most important characteristics of Servant Leadership. Empowerment involves active listening, making people part of the team and letting them know that their work is highly valued, placing emphasis on teamwork and equality. Patterson has found that when subordinates are trusted and empowered, they are self-accountable for the results they produce. Empowerment also gives followers an opportunity to move into a new and more powerful role. True empowerment does not limit followers' options and decisions; it is encouraging them to take their own path, which inspires them to help others in finding their own paths in doing things. From a leader's point of view, they have the responsibility to clearly communicate expectations, goals, and responsibilities. Arguably, the most important aspect of empowerment is that it enables subordinates to learn, grow, and progress, all while allowing for the freedom to fail. This "safe-fail" environment compounds the followers' strengths and trust with their leadership.<sup>52</sup>

At the heart of Servant Leadership theory, and the seventh and final virtue of Patterson's Theoretical Model, is service. This function is critical to Servant Leadership in that it is not based on one's self-interest, but rather the interest of others. It requires generosity in time, energy, care, compassion, and potentially one's own possessions. Servant Leaders exhibit service as they seek to learn about each employee, encourage their creativity, and contribute to the greater good of the organization by seeking opportunities to serve others. Lastly, and most importantly, the Servant Leader serves by

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<sup>52</sup> Patterson, "Servant Leadership," 6.

being a role model to their followers, setting the example on how to serve, and promoting a positive organizational climate.<sup>53</sup>

To conclude this section on Servant Leadership, Bryant and his associates inform readers that it is not enough to simply claim that Servant Leadership works. The theory and practice of Servant Leadership must be continuously assessed and studied to determine the best way to implement it, where to implement it, and the best practices in implementing it.

### Summary

The review of the literature has exploited the Army's doctrinal view on trust; how it relates to building cohesive teams, and how commanders should implement it into their leadership philosophy. This declaration is supported by several current and former Army officers who provide their personal insights on building and sustaining trust. Outside of the ranks of the Army has been an ongoing effort to advance the theory of Servant Leadership. Although not mentioned in Army doctrine, the principles of this grounded theory have close ties with the tenets of the Army Leadership Philosophy. In chapter 4, two small case studies will compare the leadership styles of Colonel Puckett and Lieutenant General Puller to the Servant Leadership models of Robert Greenleaf, Dr. Laub, and Dr. Patterson.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 7.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Description of Design

The design of this research begins with understanding the Army's current philosophy on trust, mission command, and overall leadership philosophy. Due to an overwhelming amount of information on the topic of trust from numerous sources, the author limited the research to Army publications and journal articles written by active duty and retired Army officers. To comprehend these principles the author defines the importance trust plays within Army formations, and the significance it will have in future environments.

Second, the author researches the topic of Servant Leadership. Due to generally being a civilian term, much of the data on Servant Leadership summarized in the Literature Review was taken from online sources, mostly from The Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership and *SLTP*, an open-access peer-reviewed publication at Columbus State University. As this topic is explored in detail from writings of numerous leadership experts, college professors, and some military professionals, this thesis summarizes how former and current practitioners have sought to define, apply, and advance the principals of Servant Leadership. Also, the author explains the process and application of Servant Leadership by using all material gathered in chapter 2, as understanding the application of this grounded theory will be critical to information in the following chapters.

### Data Collection Procedures

The information collected during this study was taken from public documents that included Army Doctrine, books, biographies, journal articles from the Combined Arms Research Library, and online articles alike. The leaders in the leader studies were selected based on the researcher's personal observation, and knowledge of the individuals studied. The researcher selected Puckett after observing numerous leader development programs in which Puckett was personally involved. Furthermore, the researcher has a deep understanding of Puckett's experience and background. The researcher selected Lieutenant Puller after conducting previous case studies on him in the past. The researcher used multiple books and articles to gain an understanding of Puller's leadership style. In this process, the researcher noticed the presence of Servant Leadership principles during those studies. Finally, the author was careful in his selection of what theorists of Servant Leadership he wanted to include in this research project. Although data from many practitioners of Servant Leadership were studied, the researcher chose three specific experts due to their leadership models. Greenleaf, the founder of Servant Leadership, was selected because of his original theory and his simple "Best Test" assessment of servant leaders. Laub was selected for his "Healthy Organization" model. This particular model can be applied to both civilian and military organizations. Finally, Patterson was selected for her Servant Leadership Theoretical Model. This model presented the similarities of Army leadership principles and Servant Leadership ideas. All of the qualitative data collected during this research project was recorded in a research journal, analyzed, and stored in computer files, and is included in the bibliography of this thesis.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation

As the reader completes the Literature Review, they will begin to visualize the links between the Army's doctrine on leadership, specifically in Army Doctrine Reference Publication 6-22, and the principals of Servant Leadership. The relationship between the two subjects, Army Leadership and Servant Leadership, are analyzed in chapter 4 of this thesis. Because Servant Leadership has not been an official practice within United States military formations, the author compares and contrasts this civilian leader practice to the Army's leadership philosophy. Also in chapter 4, the author will exploit Army Leadership doctrine, identify potential opportunities to improve the doctrine, and lastly use three short leadership case studies as supporting evidence where Servant Leadership has been successfully applied to military formations.

The three leader case studies outlined later in this chapter, subtitled Leader Study, do not include any personal interviews of the persons described. Instead, data for this research was drawn from books, autobiographies, and journal articles. In these, the author outlines specific events in which these leaders implemented many of the principles of Servant Leadership in their command style. From these accounts, other published authors and eyewitness accounts explain the effects of that form of leadership and the influence it had on the unit. In addition, the information gathered about these leaders include their personal ideas on leadership, supporting the links between how the Army defines leaders, and the philosophy of Servant Leadership.

Lastly, the author concludes this thesis by generating his own theory of how Servant Leadership could be implemented into Army Doctrine. The author uses the three leader studies as evidence where the application of Servant Leadership has great potential

to positively change the culture of a unit in the United States Army. Also in the conclusion, the author makes several recommendations on future research of the topic of Servant Leadership, and offers this philosophy and practice as a tangible method that Army leaders can use to build trust within their units.

### Servant Leader Study Summary

During this study, the author suggests that Servant Leadership is an effective technique in building and sustaining trust in military units. To provide supporting evidence, the study investigates how two military leaders leveraged Servant Leadership to build trust within their formations, ultimately setting favorable conditions for their success. However, these leaders did not implement Servant Leadership as a systematic practice. Instead, it was naturally applied because of their character and moral philosophy. Although this evidence is somewhat disputable due to the personalities studied and their unintentional application of this grounded theory, the tenets of Servant Leadership remain applicable to modern command climates and the positive impact on the Soldiers and Marines under these three leaders are indisputable.

### Servant Leader Study I: Colonel Ralph Puckett

From 1950 to 1971 Colonel Ralph Puckett implemented a form of Servant Leadership on multiple occasions to build comradery in tactical units ranging from company to battalion-sized formations. In 1950, he exercised a servant style of leadership to prepare the Eighth Army Ranger Company for combat against overwhelming Chinese forces in Korea. Later, while serving as the Battalion Commander for 2-502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam, Puckett's application of Servant

Leadership proved tremendously applicable during a “last stand” battle with the North Vietnamese Army.<sup>54</sup> Testimony of Puckett’s subordinates are used in the analysis portion of this research to provide evidence in the future application of Servant Leadership in the armed forces.

Servant Leader Study II: Lieutenant General  
Lewis “Chesty” Puller

Needing no introduction to an audience of Marines, Lieutenant General Lewis (Chesty) Puller is often cited for his countless awards for valor and legendary stories of heroism. From his leadership in the Banana Wars, World War II, and Korea, his emotional leadership style effectively inspired thousands on an individual level.<sup>55</sup> In this leader study, the researcher will identify Puller’s out-front style of command, his lack of pretense of privilege, and specific accounts of his genuine connection with his Marines. These particular aspects of Servant Leadership demonstrated by Puller will be explored, more importantly; will assist in establishing a base of evidence that the theory of Servant Leadership, when applied by leaders like Puller, ultimately lead to battlefield success.

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<sup>54</sup> Puckett, *Words for Warriors*, 17.

<sup>55</sup> Jon T. Hoffman, “Charismatic Leadership: Lewis B. “Chesty” Puller,” in *The Art of Command: Military Leadership from George Washington to Colin Powell*, ed. Harry S. Laver and Jeffrey J. Matthews (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 127-139.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS

#### Introduction

The analysis of this research will seek to answer the primary and secondary questions presented in chapter 1, the common characteristics between Army doctrine and the philosophy of Servant Leadership, and themes that have been identified throughout the literature review. Those themes will then be further exploited in this chapter, to include providing real-world examples of how they were interpreted and exemplified by military leaders in the past that generated positive results in building trust within their units. This analysis is organized in a way that applies the principles of Servant Leadership outlined in the literature review to the Army's philosophy of building trust, the Army's leadership philosophy, and two leader case studies.

#### Relationships between Army Philosophy and Servant Leadership

From a position of quantitative analysis, there were many themes, trends and patterns discovered during this research. Clearly, the Army's Leadership philosophy and Servant Leadership are both styles of leadership, thus having similarities in that sense. However, the specific characteristics for each have become more apparent. This analysis identifies the similarities and differences in Army leader and Servant Leader attributes and competencies. Moreover, this research has exposed multiple opportunities for leaders to leverage many, if not all of the principles of Servant Leadership to strengthen the trust bond in their formations.



The attribute most prominently identified during the literature review was empowerment. The Army's manual on Leadership, Field Manual 6-22, states that leaders are to empower subordinates in their actions towards meeting objectives. Once mutual trust had been established within a unit, leaders at all levels can then exercise effective Mission Command. This separate doctrine informs us that once a commander creates a shared understanding by communicating their intent, subordinates are then empowered to determine how to accomplish the mission. Additionally, the Army's Mission Command philosophy asserts that part of creating a shared understanding; subordinates communicate their planned course of action for accomplishing the orders of their higher headquarters. This dialogue is critical for building mutual trust. Furthermore, if orders from higher commanders are unavailable, empowerment enables disciplined initiative, another principal of Mission Command. These themes are echoed by current and former Army leaders, expressing the importance of empowerment in many forms.

Sones declared that empowering others was a key element vital to building organizational trust in many of the organizations he has led. Second, the leader studies later in this chapter will support the constant theme of empowering others. Finally, many Servant Leadership theorists, in particular Greenleaf, Larry Spears, Laub, and Patterson, have all emphasized empowerment in their definitions and models of Servant Leadership.

Similar to Army doctrine and military leaders' explanations, Servant Leadership experts' description of empowerment include active listening, emphasizing teamwork, and valuing people. Another parallel to Army doctrine is that empowerment promotes critical and creative thinking. Servant Leader experts describe this as "encouraging

subordinates to take their own path.”<sup>56</sup> Considering the aspects of this leader attribute, it is clear that the empowerment of subordinates is a characteristic vital to building trust in both civilian and military organizations. More importantly, this particular aspect of Servant Leadership is already present in the Army’s leadership philosophy.

The most comparable competency found in both the Army’s Leadership Philosophy and the Servant Leadership domain was caring for others, or service to others. Servant Leadership theorists are adamant that caring for others is the essence of their philosophy. Greenleaf, the originator of Servant Leadership theory, accentuates the growth and welfare of the organization’s people. Three of the six key functions needed for a healthy organization described by Laub are focused on caring for its people. To be specific, valuing people, building community, and developing people are all employee focused. Laub’s model of a healthy organization stresses a culture that puts the needs of others first and it is through that in which it gains strength and power; quite different from the Army leadership philosophy of placing the mission first. On the other hand, the Army’s Chief of Staff, General Mark Milley proclaims that taking care of Soldiers and their families is among his top three priorities.<sup>57</sup>

Patterson’s theoretical model also highlights aspects of caring for others. She proclaims that love, altruism, and service are virtues possessed by Servant Leaders. When considering the heavy emphasis placed on serving others by Servant Leadership experts, there is a clear difference in the Army’s approach to this idea. While Servant Leader experts stress this importance, articulated by words such as empathy, love, altruism,

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<sup>56</sup> Patterson, “Servant Leadership,” 6.

<sup>57</sup> General Mark Milley, *39th Chief of Staff Initial Message to the Army*, 2015.

service, and care, Army doctrine is not as assertive. Although not stressed in doctrine, many active military leaders state that this characteristic is essential to building trust. In his article on trust, Sones states that caring for others is the most important aspect of his trust building philosophy. He goes on to say that, an overt display of caring for Soldiers is the doorway to any trusting relationship. In this aspect, Army doctrine ultimately comes up short. However, there seems to be an increasing number of outspoken military proclaiming that this specific trait has been beneficial to their personal leadership model.

Finally, it is clear that there are some principles of the Army's Leadership Philosophy and Servant Leadership that nest with one another. However, they each present their own individual focus. Army leadership remains very directive, and mission focused. After all, many Army leaders still use the phrase, "Mission first, people always." This adage leads Soldiers to believe in a culture where mission accomplishment is everything, which is tough to dispute. However, Servant Leadership offers a different approach to how that same mission could be accomplished. Servant Leader theorists, practitioners, and even military leaders that possess a servant-style leadership philosophy have approached their organizational goals with a people-first mindset. By understanding Soldiers' individual strengths and leveraging their intrinsic motivation, leaders focus on the development of their subordinates on a personal level. In doing so, their team felt their welfare and accomplishment of their personal goals were prioritized. In response, they reciprocated the effort to ensure their leadership and the organization accomplished the mission. By comparing historical accounts of two military leaders, and the Servant Leadership models outlined in chapter 2, the following analysis will better support the

claim that prioritizing their individual development, subordinates will work harder to accomplish the mission and ensure organizational and leader success.

### Servant Leadership Theorist Commonalities

After a detailed analysis of the research of Greenleaf, Spears, Laub, and Patterson, two main themes were consistent among all four leading theorists of Servant Leadership: empowerment, and individual growth and development of subordinates. Furthermore, it was discovered that these two commonalities were present in the testimony of former and current military leaders that include Colonel Ralph Puckett, Lieutenant General Chesty Puller, and Colonel Eric Sones. In addition to these two themes, were slightly less prominent themes that include humility, and the ability to generate mutual trust.

All the lead practitioners declare empowerment is a no-fail aspect of Servant Leadership. Articulated by Spears as empowering subordinates decision-making, and by Laub as sharing leadership, the general idea of active listening, encouraging initiative, providing subordinates' opportunities and increased authority, and generating buy-in are all synonymous with empowerment. Sones even declares that failing to empower subordinates prevents creativity and critical thinking. Not only should leaders empower others, but also the leader must be openly willing to assume risks in potential failure, thus creating a safe-fail environment for junior leaders to learn and grow. This leads to the second theme identified in this research, which is placing an emphasis on individual growth and development.

All Servant Leader theorists state that the foundation of Servant Leadership is prioritizing the individual, not the organizational goals. If the leader can ultimately advance subordinates towards their individual goals, then the employee will work to

support the overall mission. Determining if this theme is present in an organization is best described in a single question by Greenleaf: “Did those served grow because of the leader’s efforts and priorities?”<sup>58</sup> To further this analysis, did those being served become healthier, wiser, more autonomous, and more likely to serve in the future? Will they benefit as a result from the leader’s service? If the answer is yes, then Servant Leadership is present. Laub expands upon this and asserts that Servant Leaders foster a learning environment, and uses failures as opportunities to grow. Lastly, Patterson describes development as simply vision. From her point of view, the Servant Leader recognizes subordinates’ potential with respect to what that individual wants to be, instead of what the leader wants them to be.

Finally, all Servant Leader theorists articulate in one way or another the importance of humility and building trust. Humility is directly communicated by Greenleaf, Spears, and Patterson, but is less obvious among others. Laub describes it by stating Servant Leaders display authenticity, being open and assessable by all people in the organization, and valuing a strong sense of honesty and integrity. Trust, in this regard, is less emphasized due to its natural development because of performing the other principles of Servant Leadership.

Servant Leader Analysis I:  
Colonel Ralph Puckett

The Servant Leader places the needs of subordinates as the highest priority, galvanizing the trust bond between the two and strengthening the organization. This

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<sup>58</sup> Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, 13.

paradigm has been proven effective repeatedly in military service as an objective method in building trust between leaders and subordinates. Colonel Ralph Puckett's book, *Words for Warriors*, provides countless, impressive examples of Servant Leadership during his time in Vietnam, Korea, and in garrison environments.

During a tour of duty in Vietnam, 1967, then Lieutenant Colonel Puckett was serving as the Battalion Commander of 2nd Battalion (Airborne), 502nd Infantry, 101st Airborne Division. On August 13, while in his command and control helicopter, he reacted to one of his companies under intense mortar, automatic weapons, and rocket-propelled grenade fire. After receiving a report of the dire situation from a company commander on the ground, Puckett ordered the aircraft to land. He then made face-to-face contact with his company commander, Captain Ron Odom, and then directed the command and control helicopter to return to base without him. Puckett recalls his statement to Odom, "I am going to stay on the ground with you. I want to see that you get all the support you can possibly use. I have complete confidence in you. You know your company and more about commanding it than I do. You are in command. I just want to ensure that you have all the help you can use."<sup>59</sup> Throughout the two-day firefight, Puckett moved about the battlefield helping with casualties and supplies, and giving a lot of "Atta boys." Years later, Odom recalls the effect Puckett had on the nearly exhausted men.

I think it is not possible to elaborate too much about how positively I was affected, as a commander, nor how my leaders and Soldiers were affected by the actions and words of Lieutenant Colonel Puckett. His presence and actions during the battle were a constant source of confidence and a reminder that we would get all the support we needed, that all we had to do was our job. After all, that's what

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<sup>59</sup> Puckett, *Words for Warriors*, 17.

Lieutenant Colonel Puckett was doing. If he were going to stay with us until it's over, then we knew we would be successful.<sup>60</sup>

Another Soldier preparing for the last-stand battle recalls the impact Puckett had on the drained and embattled Infantry Company. "Word of Lieutenant Colonel Puckett's arrival spread like wildfire. We all stiffened up and felt that nothing bad could happen now that the Ranger was with us."<sup>61</sup> In this single harrowing event, Puckett demonstrated many of the characteristics described by the Servant Leadership theorists and academics such as Greenleaf, Laub, and Patterson. Further analysis will exploit these similarities in detail.

When compared with Greenleaf's theory, it could be argued that Puckett is a natural servant, who views his position as a servant first, with the aspiration to lead as a commander second. Furthermore, if Greenleaf's Best Test is applied to the Soldiers under Puckett's command, it could be claimed that they grew, became wiser, more autonomous, and benefited because of Puckett's efforts and priorities; especially when considering Odom's and other Soldier's testimonies. To expand the analysis of Puckett's actions and Greenleaf's theory, Greenleaf states that Servant Leaders delegate authority, empower subordinates, and overtly place the needs of others first, helping people perform as efficiently as possible. As described in the literature review, Greenleaf expresses that a Servant Leader's method to taking action includes having situational awareness, presence, availability, empathy, generosity, foresight, and transparency. The grim

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

situation in August 1969 is an excellent example of how Puckett's actions reflect nearly all of these attributes.

Puckett's keen awareness and foresight of all of his subordinate units allowed him to take the quick action of landing his command and control helicopter at the most critical point on the battlefield. Once on the ground, his instruction to the pilot to return to base without him was an overt display of presence. This action alone demonstrated to Odom and his men that their battalion commander was willing to expose himself to the danger they faced, and that he was staying on the ground as long as they continued to fight. Additionally, it demonstrated he valued the lives of those under his command more than his own. This presence, and his conversation with the company commander, showed his availability and empathy to the Soldiers, many who faced mortal danger. With further regards to the effect of presence, one of Puckett's platoon leaders, First Lieutenant Tom Courtney, said, "Having the Ranger [Puckett] on the hill that night was the same as having another rifle company with us in the fight."<sup>62</sup>

In addition to presence and foresight, Puckett demonstrated availability. He clearly communicated to Odom that he was not there to lead his company, but to ensure he had all the support he could use. Puckett not only made himself available, but useful, and did not micromanage Odom and his platoon leaders. Lastly, Puckett exhibited the final attribute described by Greenleaf, which is transparency. His quick and open acknowledgment that Odom knew more about commanding the company than he did was an effective tool in empowering the company commander to lead the fight. Whenever Odom called for fire support, Puckett followed on his command net with, "Do it!"

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<sup>62</sup> Puckett, *Words for Warriors*, 19.



Although not necessary, this steady influence empowered Odom's authority, and ensured everyone in the rear, fire supporters included, understood the battalion commander had complete trust and confidence in Odom's decisions.

When matched with Laub's definition of a "Healthy Organization," Puckett makes evident that his style of leadership possesses the qualities outlined by Laub; valuing people, providing leadership, sharing leadership, building community, developing people, and displaying authenticity.

First, and without question, Puckett valued his people. In chapter 2, Laub declared that leaders who value their people offer their trust up front; they do not have to earn it. Additionally, they serve by displaying the qualities of trust and valuing people. Puckett's actions on the battlefield of Vietnam are indisputable evidence that he views his Soldiers as the most important asset within his unit. As previously communicated, his order for the pilot to return to base without him was an overt message to the Soldiers that their commander was not going to maintain his opportunity to exit in the event the initiative was lost.

Second, Puckett provided leadership. In Laub's model, he describes leadership as initiative, influence, and impact. From the instant that Puckett directed his command and control helicopter to land, to his communication to Odom, to the impact he had articulated by Soldiers in the aftermath, Puckett met Laub's criteria. Additionally, Puckett used clear and concise language and empowered his subordinates, two other characteristics described by Laub.

Third, Puckett shares his leadership. He maximizes the efficiency within the organization by empowering others, delegating authority to make decisions, and placing

himself, the leader, in a supportive role. This servant form of leadership ultimately generates more trust within the unit. Puckett not only demonstrated empowerment in Vietnam, most notably to Odom, but he articulated this approach in a *Military Review* article in 1970, ironically the same year Greenleaf first coined the term, Servant Leadership. Puckett states that to meet the high-performance goals of the organization, the leader should use intrinsic motivation. He states that the focus should be on the goals of the individual, where the supervisor's interest and unselfish concern is the success of the individual, having a marked effect on their performance. During the situation in Vietnam, where the subordinates were empowered to make decisions, Puckett placed himself in a supporting role. As a result, the subordinates appreciated the confidence and trust shown by their senior. To justify this trust, they expend the necessary effort for outstanding performance. Puckett states that the subordinates view themselves as "junior partners" to their commander and are comfortable making recommendations as they feel they have a voice in the organization. If their recommendations are not accepted, the reasons will be explained in such a way that the subordinate feels no threat in the non-agreement. Such processes improve *esprit de corps*, morale, and teamwork.<sup>63</sup>

Fourth, Puckett is an effective team builder, or in Laub's words, he builds community. During Puckett's first assignment in Korea, he volunteered to serve as the Commander of the Eighth Army Ranger Company, a position normally reserved for a captain. Having no previous combat experience, or active Army leadership experience for that matter, Second Lieutenant Puckett was charged with building the first Ranger

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<sup>63</sup> Ralph Puckett, "Management and Combat Command," *Military Review* (October 1970): 79.

formation since World War II. In only eight weeks, Puckett turned conventional Soldiers, many who were not infantrymen, into a force capable of conducting irregular warfare, raids, and long-range reconnaissance missions forward of the Eighth Army's advance. His team-building efforts eventually proved tremendously effective on the night of November 23, 1950 where his company of 51 Rangers defended against five waves of Chinese attacks on Hill 205.

While sustaining numerous casualties, including Puckett who had refused evacuation, the embattled company continued to defend their position. At 2:45 a.m., the Chinese launched their sixth and final attack with an overwhelming mortar barrage followed by an advance of 600 Chinese infantrymen. Critically low on ammunition, desperately outnumbered, and at catastrophic risk of being overrun, the severely wounded Puckett ordered the remainder of his Rangers to withdraw and to leave him behind. Disobeying their commander's orders, two of Puckett's subordinates carried him back to friendly lines while constantly under fire by Chinese forces. Puckett's Servant Leadership, specifically his ability to build community, ultimately saved the lives of many of the Soldiers in the Eighth Army Ranger Company, including his own.

In Dr. Patterson's Servant Leadership Theoretical Model, she describes many virtues that Servant Leaders possess, many of which were practiced by Colonel Puckett, most specifically *Agapao* Love, altruism, and trust. In previous analysis, Puckett's actions in Vietnam on August of 1969, he clearly demonstrated his genuine love for his comrades. As Patterson puts it, *Agapao* Love is to do the right thing, at the right time, for the right reasons. She also states that Servant Leaders are real without pretense and show sincere appreciation. In the days following the situation in Vietnam, Puckett was quick to

recognize Captain Odom's heroics of the battle. Knowing that Odom was to return home in a few days, Lieutenant Colonel Puckett insisted that his brigade commander expedite a Silver Star for Odom that would allow Puckett to present it in the presence of his Soldiers.<sup>64</sup> There would be many other awards given for that particular battle, but this example showed Puckett's true *Agapao* Love for his men.

Colonel Puckett is also an altruistic leader. In chapter 2, Patterson defines altruism in the sense of Servant Leadership as possessing a tendency to help others, regardless of the personal sacrifice involved. Leaders with an altruistic nature gain pleasure in helping others succeed. When considering Puckett's actions on Hill 205, his altruism was exposed on multiple occasions. During that dire, nightlong firefight with the Chinese, Puckett refused evacuation after being wounded several times. Furthermore, his final order to leave him behind as the Rangers retrograde off the hill showed incredible selflessness, in hopes his men could move quicker without carrying him.

The final virtue of Patterson's theoretical model is trust. Arguably, the most significant and most discussed aspect of not only Servant Leadership theory, but Army Leadership philosophy as well, the building and maintaining of trust within all of Puckett's organizations was clearly present. As described in Army Doctrine Reference Publication 6-0, *Mission Command*, trust is gained or lost through everyday actions, shared experiences, training, two-way communication, and the emphasis on the welfare of the Soldiers. Furthermore, Soldiers' trust in their leadership is strengthened when they see mission accomplishment while sharing hardships and danger.<sup>65</sup> Puckett's reputation

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<sup>64</sup> Puckett, *Words for Warriors*, 18.

<sup>65</sup> Department of the Army, ADP 6-0, 3.

for leading by example and sharing hardships and danger with his Soldiers has rarely been surpassed, and his emphasis on the welfare and development of his subordinates has been a hallmark of his leadership. From the formation of the Eighth Army Ranger Company, to the battlefields of Vietnam, Puckett's trust in his Soldiers, and their trust in him generated success in the lives of the men under his command.

The leadership of Colonel Ralph Puckett presents a strong case for the exercise of Servant Leadership. On many occasions, most notably in Korea and Vietnam, he exhibited many of the Servant Leadership characteristics advocated by Greenleaf, Laub, and Patterson that resulted in overwhelming success. This success was not about his advancement as a leader, but the growth and welfare of those under his command and the organization as a whole.

Servant Leader Analysis II: Lieutenant General  
Lewis "Chesty" Puller

There is no debate over Lieutenant General Lewis (Chesty) Puller's legendary status as a Marine hero based on numerous acts of valor in the face of certain danger, but what it is often most admired by the Marines under his command was his leadership style. With a combination of a larger-than-life attitude and lead-by-example philosophy, he was able to inspire and influence others on an individual and emotional level. Moreover, he specifically prioritized the welfare of his subordinates by maintaining a genuine connection with those in his charge. Although quite different from the fashion demonstrated by Colonel Puckett, Puller's blunt character and approach to motivating Marines is another strong case for Servant Leadership. By using Patterson's theoretical

model of Servant Leadership to measure Puller's Servant Leader virtuous construct, the analysis exposes his *Agapao* Love, Humility, Altruism, Vision, and Trust.

Arguably, no other leaders have shown as much love for their subordinates as that of Puller. By prioritizing the welfare of his Marines, Puller consistently worked to gain the love of his subordinates by treating them with every possible act of kindness and humility. As best described by Jon T. Hoffman, "His men loved him . . . because he was one of themselves, with no interest apart from their interest; because he raised them to his own level, respecting them not merely as soldiers, but as comrades."<sup>66</sup> Patterson describes Love in the aspect of Servant Leadership as having such devotion for one's subordinates that they focus on their employees first, their talents second, and how they can benefit the organization last; with no consideration about themselves. Puller is the epitome of this definition, and becomes evident in 1942. After months of fighting on Guadalcanal, Puller's battalion surgeon commented on his genuine care for his men, stating, "Puller felt so deeply the loss of his men, and became more and more thoughtful of them and became almost fanatical in his desire to see that they were properly cared for."<sup>67</sup> This is only a snapshot of evidence of Puller's genuine appreciation for his followers, and it was through his foundation of love that trust was built within the numerous units that he led.

With a resume of daring heroics and character of terse words and colorful phrases, one might not immediately identify the humility possessed by Puller. However, a closer look at his leadership style will exploit humility as one of his strongest attributes.

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<sup>66</sup> Hoffman, "Charismatic Leadership," 139.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

Patterson describes Servant Leaders possessing humility as the non-overstatement of one's own merits, the avoidance of self-focus, and the ability to take recommendations from everyone within the organization. While serving as a new platoon leader in Haiti, then Lieutenant Puller was tremendously effective in taking counsel from his more experienced Non-Commissioned Officers, and even his Haitian counterparts; a task many of his American peers found nearly impossible to accomplish. Puller on the other hand actively sought and readily accepted the recommendations of the experienced and proven junior leaders.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, by working closely with the Haitian Non-Commissioned Officers, implementing their advocated tactics, Puller's platoon was able to effectively target several enemy camps. One of his fellow officers observed, "He [Puller] made friends with the Haitians of all classes and by doing so inspired confidence in their minds of our mission."<sup>69</sup>

Another example of Puller's humility was his insistence on living and operating under the same conditions of his subordinates. While serving as a battalion commander in the Seventh Marines on Guadalcanal, he refused the creature comforts common among other commanders. Lieutenant Colonel Puller would wash his clothes in the river alongside the Marines in his battalion, ensured all his men ate before he did, and made sure chaplains held frequent services for his unit.<sup>70</sup> On another occasion, after being promoted to full colonel and commander of the First Marines on Pavuvu, Colonel Puller would wait with the lowest private in long chow lines, and live in a dirt-floored tent with

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 140.

his men.<sup>71</sup> Much of this evidence could be attributed to his upbringing of economic struggles and thus, he had no pretense of privilege.

Another construct of Patterson's Servant Leadership Theoretical Model is Altruism. Puller had a tendency to help others succeed, regardless of the personal sacrifice involved. In a complicated maneuver on the island of Guadalcanal, Lieutenant Colonel Puller found his battalion cut off from the remainder of the regiment, and nearly surrounded by a much larger Japanese force. After discovering there were no plans for a rescue attempt, Puller signaled an offshore destroyer to pick him up, rendezvous with an amphibious craft at a landing site, then ordered his men to withdrawal under the cover of naval gunfire. He personally led the landing craft ashore to supervise the withdrawal, ultimately risking his own life to ensure there was no unnecessary risk to the lives of his Marines.<sup>72</sup> His altruistic approach was noticed, as one private asserted, "No commander on Guadalcanal was so well endowed with the men who fairly worshipped him."<sup>73</sup>

The fourth virtue of Servant Leadership demonstrated by Puller is vision. The Army describes vision as the leader's ability to provide situational understanding, a clear end state, and an approach of how the organization will reach that end state. In contrast, Patterson describes a Servant Leader's vision as the recognition of their subordinate's potential, and how it could be developed to reach personal and professional goals. Although somewhat outspoken about his opposition of formal military education, Puller's ability to develop leadership skills in junior officers had pronounced effects. In a speech

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 140.



to junior officers in 1937, Major General Thomas Holcomb echoed Puller's philosophy on officer development by reaffirming, "There is one characteristic of enlisted men that I especially want to point out to you, and that is their rapid and accurate appraisal of their officers. Every military organization is like a mirror in which the commander sees himself reflected. Whether consciously or unconsciously, men take their cue from their officers. If the officer is diligent, his men will strive to exceed him in diligence; if he is thorough, they will be thorough; if he is thoughtful of them, they will constantly be seeking opportunities to do something for him."<sup>74</sup> It was through this philosophy that Puller set an ideal example of officership, a method of leader development that few commanders could replicate.

The final Servant Leadership trait exhibited by Puller is trust. Again, the most important trait among Army doctrine and Servant Leadership theory, trust is the foundation of any successful organization, and it was no different with Puller and his Marines. First, Puller possessed an ability to cultivate a deep bond with enlisted men, preserving a close relationship with his most junior subordinates even as he rose even higher in rank; a task that few leaders could imitate. Second, he understood and practiced explaining the purpose of each task. During one coaching session with his junior leaders he testified, "Gentlemen, if you want to get the most out of your men give them a break! Don't make them work completely in the dark. If you do, they won't work a bit more than they have to. But if they comprehend they'll work like mad."<sup>75</sup> This simple communication between Puller's subordinate leaders and their Marines generated

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<sup>74</sup> Hoffman, "Charismatic Leadership," 137.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

teamwork, confidence, and open dialogue that allowed for ideas to flow up and down the chain of command. His integrity, respect for others, and genuine service to his unit was an essential element of relationship building and the strength of the organizational culture. To summarize the culture of mutual trust in Puller's unit, one Marine who served in Puller's detachment recalled the high regard that Puller's genuine interest produced in the men stating, "We would do anything he asked-willingly. In fact, we would go overboard to please him."<sup>76</sup>

In word and deed, Puller personified Servant Leadership. When measured against Robert Greenleaf's Best Test, determining whether the people in the organization grew from exposure to the leader, the Marines who fought with Puller in the Banana Wars, World War II, and Korea have expressed countless statements of trust and admiration for him. Nevertheless, it was ultimately his duty to the principles of leadership, and his unwavering commitment to his men that proved successful. Like the foundations of Servant Leadership described by Larry Spears, the troops came first.

### Summary

Army doctrine on Leadership and Mission Command is generally leader focused. It uses a leadership requirements model to inform leaders on what attributes and competencies they must possess what they should do, ultimately using Mission Command as a vehicle. Contrarily, Servant Leadership philosophy is people focused, with an emphasis on individual development and the welfare of the organization's employees. Although both philosophies have different focuses, they both possess useful

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 135.

themes that are essential to building trust. When considering the secondary research questions, it is evident that servant-style leadership is a useful method to build organizational trust. As demonstrated on multiple accounts by Colonel Puckett and Lieutenant General Puller, intentional or not, emphasizing the development and welfare of Soldiers generates incredibly positive benefits to the entire organization.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

#### Significance of the Research

This research essentially offers Servant Leadership as a practical and effective method to build the trust necessary to enable units to operate decentralized in future, uncertain environments. Furthermore, it exploits the study of general leadership that is so critical for effective military operations, specifically in the aspect of subordinate development. With a greater understanding of Servant Leadership, Army leaders not only have access to a different perspective on their approach to leading, but more tools to enable a culture of mutual trust with an emphasis on the development of subordinate growth.

The second point of significance of this research is an evidence-based analysis of leaders who have effectively implemented a servant-style philosophy within the multiple units that they led. By providing numerous testimony from superiors, peers, and subordinates of Colonel Puckett and Lieutenant General Puller, the author delivers to fellow leaders and leadership theorists' new studies on effective leadership across multiple generations, demonstrating the principles of Servant Leadership and the timelessness of its relevance. It is with these studies that leaders can further discuss the implementation of Servant Leadership, its theory and practice, and potentially leverage its principles to improve their current approach to leadership and their leader development process in their organizations.

Lastly, this research identifies several attributes that can potentially improve the leadership abilities of Soldiers at all levels. Using the ALRM as a baseline, and blending

the characteristics introduced by Servant Leadership, it could be argued that the ALRM is deficient, specifically in serving others, and empowering others.

### Findings

The results of this study do not support any objective hypothesis that Servant Leadership is more effective than the Army's Leadership Philosophy, it only builds upon existing principles and offers leaders an additional approach to achieving their objectives. Furthermore, it does not support a hypothesis largely because there are multiple forms of leadership, many that have already been proven tremendously effective. While the effectiveness and practicality of Servant Leadership is indisputable, it remains subjective to the individual leaders who exercise it. With different situations often requiring a different leadership approach, it could be argued that Servant Leadership may not be the most appropriate in some cases. However, the results of the study do prove Servant Leadership as an effective and practical means to building trust and developing subordinates within military formations. The leader studies alone support this claim. It simply must be understood that other forms of leadership have been proven just as effective.

The second main finding was the differences between the Army's approach to leadership and the servant's approach to leadership. The results of this research indicate that Army leadership remains very directive and mission focused, hence the phrase "Mission first." Servant Leadership contrarily focuses on the organization's people; and if implemented in an Army unit, it would result in the maxim "Soldiers first." The former adage leads Soldiers to believe in a culture where mission accomplishment is the only thing that matters. However, the Servant Leadership approach would emphasize Soldier

growth, resulting in a more productive unit to accomplish the mission; and adding, “Serves others” to the ALRM. Evidence of this finding was discovered in the testimony of those in Colonel Puckett and Lieutenant General Puller’s units, where Soldiers and Marines alike were willing to bear any burden to ensure their commander’s success. Accordingly, the unit achieved resounding success due to the Soldiers and Marines’ tireless efforts.

The third finding identified in the research were the similarities between the Army’s Leadership Philosophy, Mission Command and Servant Leadership theory, specifically the role of empowerment. Results indicated that Mission Command doctrine and Servant Leadership literature both recognize the need for individual initiative, candid and constructive feedback, and taking wise risks; all necessary not only in the trust building process, for mission accomplishment. Additionally, based on the theory of Mission Command and the analysis of this study, it can be asserted that empowering and encouraging subordinates to take disciplined initiative are absolutes in both Mission first and Soldiers first environments.

In summary, this study has clarified the similarities and differences between the Army’s approach to leadership and Servant Leadership philosophy. The overarching theme of the research was that Army leadership is focused on mission accomplishment, with an emphasis on leader development as one part of that mission. Servant Leadership is focused on individual growth, with mission accomplishment being a byproduct of the efforts of the leader and the process. Although the Servant Leader approach sounds less attractive, and potentially risky to some military leaders, the evidence found in the leader studies prove otherwise. Nevertheless, perhaps Robert Greenleaf’s original claim was

accurate; to be a Servant Leader one must aspire to serve first, with an inclination to lead that follows.

### Recommendations

This research project focused primarily on Servant Leadership, with an aim at introducing it into Army doctrine. However, due to the limitations defined in chapter I, this topic requires additional research to further the discussion and challenge its relevance in the Profession of Arms. Based on the findings of this study, the author makes several recommendations for future researchers in field of Servant Leadership.

First, future researchers should determine if the concept is worthy of incorporating into existing Professional Military Education, in particularly the Command and General Staff College, and senior Non-Commissioned Officer education curriculums such as the Master Leaders Course and the Sergeant Majors Course. Understanding the theory of Servant Leadership may require an audience of more mature leaders who possess the level of influence required to implement its principles. In addition, quantitative data collection from senior and organizational level leaders may be required to determine the value of the instruction, and its practicality and applicability to today's Army.

Secondly, this research discovered an overwhelming amount of information on the subject of Servant Leadership, especially considering the enormity of information found at Dr. Bryant's online journal, *SLTP*. This resource alone is not only full of incredibly useful information on the subject, but also a hub of Servant Leadership practitioners, all who have submitted countless vignettes of Servant Leadership in action. Future researchers are urged to leverage this resource and Bryant's expertise in advancing

this topic into Army formations. There, they will find numerous studies on Servant Leadership that have been applied to civilian and military formations alike, all with various points of view from an abundance of different authors.

Third, future researchers should consider the principles of Servant Leadership matched against the ALRM, with the aim to build upon and improve it. During this research, it was found that although Army leadership philosophy, Mission Command doctrine, and Servant Leadership theory all encourage empowerment and care for subordinates, the ALRM is deficient in these areas. If time was available to collect additional sources of literature, more evidence could support a potential addendum to the ALRM, specifically to empower others, and serve others.

Finally, this research did not seek to determine if Servant Leadership is learned philosophy, or if it requires a natural inclination to serve others. Greenleaf suggests that, “It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead.”<sup>77</sup> However, this is only one theorist’s point of view, and more investigation is required to prove or disprove this claim. When considering an incorporation of Servant Leadership into Army doctrine and Professional Military Education, it must be determined if Servant Leadership can potentially be learned from the Soldiers and leaders who would exercise it.

### Summary

Servant Leadership is undoubtable an effective method to build and sustain trust in military organizations. This assertion has been validated in the actions and outcomes of

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<sup>77</sup> Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, 13.



Colonel Puckett and Lieutenant General Puller. Additionally, it has been made clear that Servant Leadership is primarily focused on the growth and development of subordinates, with a derivative of mission success that follows. Although not a traditional method practiced by many successful military leaders in the past, Servant Leadership possesses some similarities of today's Army leadership philosophy and exhibits additional tools to expand upon commanders' leadership ideology and development process. However, this unique theory requires additional research before fully inculcating it into Army doctrine, with an emphasis on quantitative analysis and further examination from leadership scholars and military leaders alike.

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