Creation of a Multi-Rater Feedback Assessment for the Development of Servant Leaders at the Veterans Health Administration

Heather Schwetschenau McCarren, Ph.D.,
VHA National Center for Organization Development

Jamie Lewis-Smith, Ph.D.,
Nemours Children's Health System

Linda Belton, M.S., LFACHE,
VHA National Center for Organization Development

Boris Yanovsky, M.S.,
VHA National Center for Organization Development

Jaimee Robinson, M.S.,
VHA National Center for Organization Development

Katerine Osatuke, Ph.D.,
VHA National Center for Organization Development

Authors' Note:
Address correspondence to Heather Schwetschenau McCarren, VHA National Center for Organization Development, 11500 Northlake Drive, Suite 230, Cincinnati, OH 45249; Heather.McCarren@va.gov; 513-247-4680.

Author Contact Information:
Heather Schwetschenau McCarren, Ph.D., VHA National Center for Organization Development, 11500 Northlake Drive, Suite 230, Cincinnati, OH 45249; heather.mccarren@va.gov; 513-247-4680.

Jamie Lewis-Smith, Ph.D., Nemours Children's Health System, 10140 Centurion Parkway North, Jacksonville, FL 32256; jamielewissmith@gmail.com; 330-861-3930.

Linda Belton, M.S., LFACHE, VHA National Center for Organization Development, 14 Westbury Court, Ann Arbor MI 49105; linda.belton@gmail.com; 734-332-9983.

Boris Yanovsky, M.S., VHA National Center for Organization Development, 11500 Northlake Drive, Suite 230, Cincinnati, OH 45249; Boris.Yanovsky@va.gov; 513-247-4680.

Jaimee Robinson, M.S., VHA National Center for Organization Development, 11500 Northlake Drive, Suite 230, Cincinnati, OH 45249; Jaimee.Robinson@va.gov; 513-247-4680.

Katerine Osatuke, Ph.D., VHA National Center for Organization Development, 11500 Northlake Drive, Suite 230, Cincinnati, OH 45249; Katerine.Osatuke@va.gov; 513-247-4680.

Abstract

The philosophy and associated outcomes of servant leadership are particularly well-suited for the current challenges faced by the healthcare industry. However, in order for organizations to take advantage of the potential benefits of this approach, identifying consistent and sound techniques for developing leaders into servant leaders is necessary. A comprehensive review of the existing literature revealed a lack of a theory-based framework for how to intentionally develop an organization's servant leadership culture to guide the Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) efforts. Furthermore, existing servant leadership assessments did not lend themselves well to leadership development, as they were designed as research tools without the leader's end user experience in mind. Using culture change and leadership development best practices as a guide, the VHA developed a multi-rater behavioral feedback tool based on a leading servant leadership model as the first step in its journey to create a culture of servant leadership. The results of confirmatory and exploratory factor analyses are presented, which validate the proposed Seven Pillars of Servant Leadership Model (Sipe & Frick, 2009) on which the instrument was based. The paper concludes with a discussion of the next steps in the VHA's process in hopes of providing a blueprint for other organizations seeking to embed servant leadership principles in their culture.

Keywords: Servant Leadership, Multi-rater Assessment, Leader Development, Leadership, 360-degree Assessment, Healthcare, Developing Servant Leaders

The Beginning of the Veterans Health Administration's Journey Toward a Culture of Servant Leadership

Servant leadership as a philosophy was proposed more than four decades ago by Robert K. Greenleaf (1970), yet the systematic evaluation and scientific inquiry into it has a recent history, with most of the work occurring after the turn of the millennium. Since the research into this leadership philosophy is in its early stages, the field is lacking consistency and consensus in the definition, measurement, and application of the construct (van Dierendonck, 2011; Brown & Bryant, 2015). In parallel, many leaders and organizations, such as TDIndustries, Southwest, and Starbucks (to name a few), have been putting servant leadership into practice without a strong foundation of research to guide this application. In their review of future directions for servant leadership, Bryant and Brown (2014) identified the

need to "advance servant leadership, both as a field of academic study and as a management practice" (p. 8).

This paper will begin to bridge the gap between theory and practice by outlining the methodical approach the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is taking to intentionally create a culture of servant leadership, with a specific emphasis on the creation of a multi-rater feedback assessment for developing its leaders. With the objective of using sound research and theory to guide the VHA's approach, we repeatedly looked to the servant leadership literature in an effort to find a blueprint for culture change and leadership development. However, as is highlighted in the step-by-step process delineated within this paper, the authors found a lack of empirically supported practices for how to develop a culture or an organization's leaders towards servant leadership. Therefore, we referred to the literature on culture change (e.g., Schein, 1992) and leadership development practices (e.g., Van Velsor, McCauley, & Ruderman, 2010) to guide us in our approach.

Consistent with Brown and Bryant's (2015) call for a "behaviorally based set of teachable practices" (p. 17), this paper will briefly review some of the actions taken to embed servant leadership into the VHA culture. We place a particular emphasis on the first major step in our culture change effort: the creation of a multi-rater tool to help leaders identify specific servant leadership behaviors that they can develop and strengthen to become servant leaders. This was a necessary step because, although many servant leadership assessments exist, most were developed specifically for research purposes and do not lend themselves well to the application of leadership development. In the discussion section, we will outline our next steps in the journey of developing servant leaders in the VHA, with the hope it can serve as a blueprint for other organizations interested in embedding servant leadership into their cultures and leadership practices.

Servant Leadership as a Natural Fit for the Healthcare Industry

In the United States, the healthcare industry faces an uncertain and turbulent future resulting from many factors, such as the Affordable Care Act legislation, steeply rising costs, unequal quality of care, and technology driving a shift towards informed consumerism (Porter & Lee, 2013; Trastek, Hamilton, & Niles, 2014). Further increasing the complexity of these challenges are the diverging solutions that have been proposed by various healthcare stakeholders (Trastek, Hamilton, & Niles, 2014), ranging from financial reform, system and role redesign, advanced technology, personalized medicine, and innovative care delivery models (Vlasses & Smeltzer, 2007). While many potential solutions have been debated, it is clear

that strong leadership will be necessary to address the multiple challenges facing the healthcare industry.

A leadership focused solution to current day challenges is a logical approach to meeting challenges in healthcare (Trastek, Hamilton, & Niles, 2014), especially considering the well-documented influence a leader has on workplace climate and related organizational outcomes (Liden, Wayne, & Sparrowe, 2000; McCuddy & Cavin, 2008). As noted by Hernandez, Luthanen, Ramsel, and Osatuke (2014), a positive workplace climate has psychological benefits to individuals and substantial, empirically documented benefits to organizations (Hernandez et al., 2014). Many organizations have dedicated resources for leadership development programs for this reason, and a strong leadership model that can be used by leaders to assess their performance and develop strategies for improving their leadership skills is one important component of such programs.

Servant leadership is a particularly well-suited leadership model for healthcare because of healthcare's inherent servant nature (Schwartz & Tumblin, 2002). As articulated by Greenleaf (1977), servant leadership emphasizes the leader's role in "making sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served" (p. 27). Trastek, Hamilton, and Niles (2014) assert that the skills often associated with servant leadership, such as listening, empathy, and awareness overlap with patient-centered communication, which has been linked to outcomes such as patient satisfaction, adherence, and more positive health outcomes (Wanzer, Booth-Butterfield, & Gruber, 2004). While there is limited research directly examining servant leadership behaviors and patient outcomes in healthcare settings (Parris & Peachy, 2012), research in non-healthcare settings has demonstrated a link between servant leadership culture and customer service (Liden, Wayne, Liao, & Meuser, 2014). It is reasonable to expect a similar positive impact in healthcare settings, lending credence to servant leadership as a viable framework for healthcare organizations.

In addition to empirical support for the impact of servant leadership on customer service, there is also evidence suggesting servant leadership positively impacts employee outcomes. For example, Parris and Peachy's (2012) comprehensive review of empirical research regarding outcomes of servant leadership found that servant leadership is associated with greater job satisfaction, employee well-being, team effectiveness and collaboration between team members.

Despite the clear advantages servant leadership could provide to the healthcare industry, hierarchical and domineering leadership styles, which have been tied to poor employee and customer satisfaction, continue to be commonplace. In contrast,

outside the healthcare sector, service industries have repeatedly demonstrated that other leadership styles, including servant leadership, are more successful in energizing employees (Schwartz & Tumblin, 2002). Given that the single most important goal for healthcare organizations is caring for others, and considering empirical support for the impact of servant leadership on both patient and employee outcomes, we, and others (e.g., Neill & Saunders, 2008; Trastek, Hamilton, & Niles, 2014), argue that servant leadership should become the preferred leadership model in healthcare.

Veterans Health Administration

The VHA is the nation's largest integrated healthcare system, serving over 9 million enrolled veterans and employing more than 305,000 health care professionals and support staff at more than 1,500 sites of care, including hospitals, community based outpatient clinics, nursing homes, domiciliaries, and vet centers. The Department of Veterans Affairs has a service-driven mission that attracts dedicated employees, many of whom are veterans themselves. This mission, to fulfill President Lincoln's promise: *"To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan"* by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's veterans, is aligned with the values underlying servant leadership in that it starts first with the call to serve (Greenleaf, 1970).

The VHA's continued commitment to veterans and their care is reflected in current strategic goals for the organization, which emphasize patient-centered healthcare delivered by engaged, collaborative teams. Both the goals of being patient-centric and creating engaged, collaborative teams are very much in line with the principles of servant leadership. As discussed above, the service-oriented nature of servant leadership is very consistent with the mission of the healthcare industry. Further support for servant leadership as a good fit for the VHA is the research that suggests servant-led organizations experience greater team and leader effectiveness and collaboration between team members (Parris and Peachy, 2012). Given that servant leadership and its associated outcomes are highly consistent with the mission of the healthcare industry, and specifically with the VHA's mission and strategic goals, the VHA embarked on a journey to intentionally create a culture of servant leadership as one aspect of a comprehensive approach towards the evolution of health services in the VHA.

Creating a Culture of Servant Leadership in the VHA

With the decision made to purposefully create a culture of servant leadership within the VHA, the focus shifted to the "culture-embedding mechanisms" (Schein, 1992, pg. 231) that could be put into place to influence the change that was desired. First, the authors looked to the literature for a formal, organized approach to developing a culture of servant leadership. Although a multitude of books in the popular press discuss servant leadership, the majority represent the writers' personal opinions, experiences, or single organizational case studies (e.g., Flint, 2011; Patrnchak, 2015), and are not based on systematic scientific principles or research methods. This is not surprising given that, as discussed above, rigorous empirical study of servant leadership is in its relative infancy (van Dierendonck, 2011; Brown & Bryant, 2015). Without a well-researched model for a formal, organized approach to changing an organization's culture towards servant leadership to follow, we looked to the general literature regarding culture change.

Edgar Schein (1992) identified both primary "culture-embedding mechanisms" and "secondary reinforcing mechanisms" in the creation of an organization's culture. The secondary reinforcing mechanisms consist of formal statements governing the organization's policies, procedures, mission, values, and expected behaviors as well as other formal structures such as organizational systems, design, physical space, and events (Schein, 1992). Schein (1992) strongly asserted that the formal systems only reinforce the primary mechanisms, which are the actions of the organization's leaders. That is, he stressed that it is what the organization's leaders "pay attention to, measure, and control," the behaviors they role model, what they choose to reward and punish, and how they "recruit, select, and promote organizational members" that truly creates the culture of the organization (p. 231). Therefore, as with any culture change effort, the VHA determined that making servant leadership an institutional practice would take a multi-faceted approach; it should include changing both the primary embedding mechanisms (i.e., changing our leaders' behaviors) and the secondary reinforcing mechanisms. Below is a brief outline of some of the steps the VHA is taking towards putting secondary reinforcing mechanisms into place that will create the foundational systems and structures for a culture of servant leadership; however, the main focus of the remainder of this paper will be on the VHA's process of shifting the primary embedding mechanisms, that is changing the leaders' behaviors.

Secondary Reinforcing Mechanisms

Consistent with Schein's (1992) writings, which note the importance of building desired cultural expectations into "formal statements of organizational philosophy, values, and creed [and] organizational systems and procedures" (p. 231), the VHA recently published its *Blueprint for Excellence*, a detailed vision for the evolution of health services provided by the VHA. Recognizing that a healthy culture is related to the behaviors of its leaders, the *Blueprint for Excellence* encourages leaders to "model selfless service toward veterans and staff, embracing the concept of servant leadership" (Veterans Health Administration Blueprint for Excellence, 2014).

In addition to building desired cultural expectations into formal statements, Claar, Jackson, and TenHaken (2014) assert that "to continuously reinforce the importance of servant leadership as the preferred leadership style within the organization and to institutionalize it within the organization's culture, organizations must…also evaluate managers on aspects of servant leadership in performance reviews, rewarding and promoting those who are the best examples of the servant leader" (pp. 50 – 51). To this end, the VHA recently integrated servant leadership principles into the senior executive performance review system, which will connect servant leadership behaviors to future promotions and merit-based rewards. Specifically, senior executives are asked to demonstrate how they promote employee engagement by modeling servant leadership and supporting servant leadership at all levels.

While these secondary reinforcement mechanisms are necessary foundational components to facilitate the shift in organizational practices, they are not sufficient (Schein, 1992). Instead, the primary embedding mechanisms, as outlined by Schein, have a much stronger impact on the culture of the organization, and are directly influenced by the leadership of the organization. Therefore, the individuals who are in leadership positions are the critical component to the transformation of the organization's culture and the fulcrum for changing it. This underscores the importance of shifting the leadership approach of the VHA, to which we now turn our attention.

Primary Embedding Mechanisms: Shifting towards Servant Leadership

With the goal of influencing the leadership practices in a large institution such as the VHA, the organization must consider both new and existing leaders as it considers its change strategy. As Claar, Jackson, and TenHaken (2014) suggest, the most obvious step an organization can take to create a culture of servant leadership is "to hire people to be leaders who already have the desire to serve others" (p. 50) through the process of screening and selecting for servant leadership

traits during the interview process. In support of this approach, a candidate interview guide designed to elicit behavioral examples that reflect the candidate's experience with servant leadership skills has been shared with interested medical centers, with the intention of broader dissemination across all of the VHA in the future.

Recruiting and hiring for servant leadership traits is likely to be insufficient by itself in order to change the culture of a large, established organization, especially one of the size of the VHA, which has approximately 22,000 existing leaders. Therefore, in addition to incorporating servant leadership into the VHA application selection processes, it is necessary to provide planned and structured opportunities for candidates in the leadership pipeline, new managers, and existing leaders to develop the skills, behaviors, and the mindset associated with servant leadership.

Purposeful Development of Servant Leaders

Joseph and Winston (2005) propose that "managers and leaders can improve organizational performance through the practice of servant leadership behaviors that increase trust in the manager and in the organization" (pg. 16). On a broader scale, intentional leadership development programs have been recognized as one of the most effective strategies available to organizations for successful recruitment, development and retention of available talent (Miller & Desmarais, 2007). In order for organizations to reap the potential benefits of servant leadership, the development and investigation of intentional and structured development opportunities to encourage organizations' managers to adopt servant leadership behaviors is necessary. Further, Brown and Bryant (2015) expressed the need for the construct of servant leadership to move from an "under-developed phenomenon" towards something that is "packaged into a set of replicable best management practices" (pg. 13). Therefore, in order for the field to move from theory to theory and practice, the issue of how to intentionally develop individuals into servant leaders must be addressed.

Servant Leadership as a Developable Trait

Before outlining our approach to developing servant leaders, it is first necessary to address whether a servant leader *can* be developed. According to Parris and Peachey's (2012) comprehensive review, the field of scientific investigation of servant leadership is in its infancy, and there has been almost no scientific investigation available into the processes and conditions required for developing servant leaders. The paucity of academically rigorous work in this area could be the result of many authors continuing to use Greenleaf's (1977) seminal book to define servant leadership: "it begins with the natural feeling that one wants

to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead" (pp. 13 – 14). This statement may be interpreted to mean that an individual either has or does not have the inherent characteristics of a servant leader and therefore, someone who is not naturally a servant leader cannot be developed into one. However, in line with the leader development assumptions proposed by McCauley, Van Velsor, and Ruderman (2010), the authors of this paper believe that "individuals can learn, grow, and change" (p. 3) and "that leader development can be fostered by intervening in the learning, growth, and change processes of individuals" (p. 18). Thus, everyone, even those individuals who do not possess a natural desire to serve, have the capacity to become more effective leaders through intentional leader development work, and this applies to servant leadership as well. Consistent with this view, Claar, Jackson, and TenHaken (2014) suggested there is potential for an individual who is not a natural servant leader to grow into one if they have a genuine desire to become a servant leader and consistently practice behaviors representative of a servant leadership style. Over time, they will build the trust of their followers and the organization necessary to be seen as a true servant leader.

How to Develop Servant Leaders

With the goal of developing the VHA's leaders to practice servant leadership behaviors, we again consulted the literature for guidance on how to develop a servant leader. Similar to our search for an established approach to implementing a culture of servant leadership within organizations, there was a lack of available resources providing guidance on how to design or implement a planned and structured development program to assist individuals to develop into servant leaders. Although a number of papers have outlined discrete efforts to develop servant leaders (e.g., Polleys, 2002; Roberts, 2006; Massey, Sulak, & Sriram, 2013), they have either lacked a strong foundation on the literature and theory or did not provide effective strategies that could be readily applied to a business setting. As Avolio, Walumbwa, and Weber (2009) point out beyond servant leadership specifically, "the field of leadership has done surprisingly little to focus its energies on what contributes to or detracts from genuine leadership development" (p. 442).

In sum, a need for a standard, empirically grounded model based on a theoretical foundation of the literature for developing servant leaders is still unmet. To this end, our goal was to follow the suggestion of Brown and Bryant (2015) and shift "away from limiting boundaries of a philosophy toward a learnable and teachable set of practices" (p. 17) that can be incorporated into a model for an intentional, planned, and structured program to develop servant leaders.

Leadership Development Literature

According to the leader development literature (McCauley, Van Velsor, & Ruderman, 2010), in order to grow and acquire new leadership skills, insights, and behaviors, individuals must possess the ability to learn and engage in a variety of developmental experiences. McCauley et al. identified the three basic components of developmental experiences that are necessary to facilitate growth and offer opportunities for intentional intervention when designing a leader development program: 1) assessment, 2) challenge, and (3) support. These scholars suggested that growth occurs through providing individuals with challenging experiences that stretch their knowledge, skills, and abilities, while also providing a supportive environment for experimentation, mistakes, and learning to take place, and offering regular and frequent assessments of individual progress and outcomes. They emphasized that "the best developmental experiences are rich in assessment data," and therefore suggested that feedback based on assessment results is a necessary and key component in the process of developing leaders (McCauley, Van Velsor, & Ruderman, 2010, p. 6). Therefore, as an early and essential step towards developing servant leaders in the VHA towards a culture of servant leadership, it became clear to the authors that a servant leadership assessment to provide feedback to our leaders would be needed.

The Importance of Feedback in Developing Leaders

Providing rich feedback to leaders as a part of formal development programs is considered a best practice (King & Santana, 2010). Feedback-intensive programs provide leaders "a deeper understanding of their leadership strengths and development needs, and [enable] them to develop action plans to leverage that knowledge for greater effectiveness in their work and personal lives" (King & Santana, 2010, p. 97). These authors specifically highlight the importance of receiving feedback from multiple sources, which would include the self as well as direct reports, peers, one's boss, and even customers in order to gain a clearer picture of the leader's behaviors, strengths, and limitations (King & Santana, 2010, p. 99). Multi-rater feedback, or 360-degree assessment, provides leaders insights into how their leadership behaviors are perceived by others with whom they commonly interact. Multi-rater feedback offers the benefit of summarizing input from several distinct sources, all reflective of the assessed individual's workplace performance and all relevant to incorporate in one's perspective of one's own behavior and performance at work (Conway, Lombardo, & Sanders, 2001; London & Smither, 1995).

Research into multi-rater assessments has found that ratings across rater groups are not highly correlated, which further reinforces the importance of this feedback method in providing a well-rounded picture of how one is perceived by various organizational constituents (Day, 2001). Although the lack of consistency can sometimes be frustrating for leaders (e.g. in feedback coming from different raters), with assistance to better understand the different perspectives, it can provide a more complete picture with more specific actions as a result. The insights derived from multi-rater feedback that is consistent across raters can be even more powerful and provide targeted areas for development and action steps (King & Santana, 2010). Therefore, in an effort to design a sound leader development program based on the literature and existing best practices, we determined that not only was an assessment of servant leadership needed, but specifically a multi-rater assessment of servant leadership was needed to serve as the foundational component of our program. The remainder of this paper will focus on the approach we took to examine the literature and develop a tool to meet this need.

Servant Leadership Model and Assessment Selection

After determining that a servant leadership 360-degree assessment was an important initial step of our journey to create a culture of servant leadership, we reviewed the literature to identify a servant leadership model and associated assessment that would provide our leaders with a theory-driven opportunity to learn about servant leadership and gain feedback about their behaviors from bosses, peers and direct reports. Considering the goal was the practical application of a feedback tool for developing leaders, we determined it was important that the assessment was grounded in an existing theory and behavioral in nature, preferably with an associated book or resource to distribute to participants for self-guided learning and growth.

With the specific intent of helping leaders improve upon their current behaviors in order to increase their alignment with servant leadership, we recognized the importance of considering the end user experience. Many assessments are developed for research purposes and consequently, the results of the assessments are never explicitly intended to be seen or used by the individual being assessed. For leadership development purposes, it is important that feedback from a multi-rater tool be shared with a leader who is assessed, and that it is accompanied by an informational and interpretive report that assists that leader in the use of that feedback for their development. Thus, as we reviewed existing models and assessments for use in our program, we considered the ease with which a user-friendly, easily understandable report could be generated to accompany the results of the assessment.

Finally, to ensure that the information provided by the tool would be helpful and actionable for the prospective users in the VHA, it was important that the selected theory was easy to understand and remember, consistent with the VHA values and vernacular, and, because the VHA is a government agency, free from religious references. With these criteria in mind, we initiated our search for a gold standard model of servant leadership, and associated multi-rater assessment, to use as the basis for helping the VHA employees develop their servant leadership abilities.

Existing Models of Servant Leadership

Unfortunately, despite existing as a construct for more than four decades and being the subject of empirical research for 15 years, servant leadership remains conceptually confusing with no one agreed upon definition or understanding of the core characteristics that define a servant leader (van Dierendonck, 2011). Given that there is no one clearly accepted single definition or model of servant leadership, many different models and assessments currently coexist (Brown & Bryant, 2015). Therefore, we took a methodical and comprehensive approach to reviewing the 13 leading models most often cited in the literature at the time we began this effort in 2012. We paid particular attention to models with associated assessments (summarized in Table 1). Unfortunately, most of the reviewed models had limitations with respect to our criteria, as described in more detail below.

Table 1: Servant Leadership Models Reviewed for Fit

Graham (1991)	Patterson (2003)	Sipe & Frick (2009)*
Spears (1995)	Barbuto & Wheeler (2006)*	Reed et al. (2011)*
Farling et al. (1999)	Sendjaya et al. (2008)*	van Dierendonck & Nuijten (2011)*
Page & Wong (2000)*	Keith (2008)	
Jennings (2003)	Turner (2008)	

*Indicated a model with an associated assessment; some items from those measures were included as part of the VA SL 360 development.

Limitations of Reviewed Models

Not behaviorally based. The search for a behaviorally-based model revealed the most significant weakness in existing models of servant leadership. Specifically, many models blur antecedents (i.e., intrapersonal aspects) of servant leadership, such as a desire to serve and empathy, with behaviors of servant leaders, such as showing care and concern for employees, and with mediating processes or outcomes of servant leadership, such as trust (van Dierendonck, 2011). This is

particularly problematic for a multi-rater assessment, which should be focused on feedback about observable phenomena, such as the leader's behaviors (King & Santana, 2010). This focus is important because non-behaviorally based constructs leave raters left to guess about leader's motives, values, or internal states. For example, a peer does not know the internal motives of the leader being assessed, the peer can only describe the behaviors actually observed. The blending of observed and unobserved aspects in assessment instruments lead to inaccurate and inconsistent feedback. In addition to the difficulty raters will face, non-behaviorally specific feedback also makes it difficult for leaders to identify the specific areas on which to focus their professional development efforts.

An oft cited model of servant leadership was proposed by Larry Spears (1995), one of the first scholars to translate Greenleaf's ideas into specific characteristics of a servant leader. Spears distinguished 10 characteristics generally referred to as the essential elements of servant leadership. These characteristics, however, have never been operationalized. They also do not offer a clear distinction between interpersonal aspects, intrapersonal aspects, and outcomes of servant leadership (van Dierondonck, 2011). Another popular model is Patterson's (2003), which is based on virtues that comprise servant leadership and consists of qualities of the leader, actions a leader takes, and the internal state of the leader. While Patterson's model contributed greatly to the understanding of servant leadership, it is not solely focused on the behavioral expression of servant leadership and therefore is difficult to use as a basis for designing a multi-rater assessment and development program. These insufficiencies are representative of the limitations we found with the majority of the existing models described in the servant leadership literature.

Factor structure. The number of factors across models was also a major limitation of existing models of servant leadership. The reviewed models ranged from one-dimensional theories (Ehrhart, 2004) to models consisting of up to 20 characteristics of a servant leader (Russell & Stone, 2002). Overall, van Dierendonck (2011) noted a total of 44 characteristics across the leading theories of servant leadership, many of which overlapped (van Dierendonck, 2011). One factor models were too simplistic from the perspective of leadership development, and likely missing important elements of servant leadership. The most comprehensive models, on the other hand, were too complex with overlapping factors or lacked clear distinctions between factors. From a leadership development perspective, such models can be difficult for leaders to remember, and therefore were not well-suited for our goal of a straightforward easy to understand and remember model.

Inconsistent with the VHA values or vernacular. As we considered the importance of generating employee and leader buy-in and adoption of servant leadership as a guiding philosophy for the VHA culture, it was clear that selecting a model that fit with the VHA's existing values and vernacular was critical. Apart from blending antecedents and outcomes with behaviors, or being too simplistic or too complex, many models used language that did not lend itself well to broad acceptance within a government institution, such as *agapao love* (Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005), *emotional healing* (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Liden et al., 2008), *voluntary subordination* or *transcendental spirituality* (Sendjaya, Sarros, & Santora, 2008). In addition, considering the VHA is a part of the United States government, it was necessary to avoid any strong language or religious references that might come across as biased to some users and therefore interfere with their acceptance of the underlying message of servant leadership.

Selection of a Servant Leadership Model

As described above, our goal was to select a behavioral model of servant leadership on which a multi-rater assessment and complementary report could be based, preferably with an associated book as a resource for leaders. We wanted the model and its associated constructs to be easily understood and remembered, and for it to use language that was free from specific religious references, while being consistent with the VHA values and culture. As we reviewed the existing literature, we had an experience similar to Sipe and Frick's (2009) who found "frustration over searching for – and never finding – help in converting the characteristics of Servant Leadership into sustainable, measurable competencies" (p. xii). Sipe and Frick (2009) noted that the Seven Pillars model "was born of a desire to be concrete about how to *implement* Servant Leadership, without turning Robert Greenleaf's formulation – leading by serving first – into a collection of 'tips and tricks'" (p. xii). Their desire was to offer actionable, measurable skills and competencies to provide leaders guidance on how to change their behaviors and actually move from a set of principles and philosophies to the practice of servant leadership (Sipe & Frick, 2009, p. xiii). Further, they offered that their approach will help leaders "take a series of concrete steps to evolve Servant-Leader behaviors…" and integrate them into their daily routines (p. xiii).

After evaluating all the major models of servant leadership, we were not able to find a perfect match with our criteria; however, it was determined that Sipe and Frick's (2009) Seven Pillars of Servant Leadership was the closest fit as it was designed to be a comprehensive model of servant leadership (i.e., include both the 'people' and 'leader' aspects) and identified behavioral competencies that could be put into action for development. Further, we believed that an informational, user-

friendly report to help leaders to interpret their feedback would flow naturally from the guidance of their book and the structure of their model. Therefore, the Sipe and Frick (2009) Seven Pillars of Servant Leadership model was recommended by the authors as the framework for the VHA's leadership development and culture change approach.

The Seven Pillars outlined in Sipe and Frick's (2009) model are quite consistent with other scholars' attempts to operationalize servant leadership, but are more behaviorally descriptive. While there is no clear consensus on what behaviors define a servant leader, van Dierendonck (2011) deduced six key characteristics of servant leaders that appear across several leading models and assessments: show humility, are authentic, empower and develop people, provide direction, and are stewards for the good of the whole. Table 2 ties these characteristics to the competencies of Sipe and Frick's (2009) model, which encompasses those identified by van Dierendonck (2011), with the addition of two other behaviors that have been shown to characterize servant leadership: persuasive communication (e.g., Spears, 1998; Laub, 1999) and building teams and community (e.g., Spears, 1998; Laub, 1999; Reed, Vidaver-Cohen, & Coldwell, 2011).

Table 2: Comparison of the Seven Pillars Model Components to Servant Leadership Characteristics Identified by van Dierendonck (2011)

Sipe and Frick (2009) The Seven Pillars of Servant Leadership*	van Dierendonck (2011)
Pillar 1: Person of Character • Maintains Integrity • Demonstrates Humility • Engages in Value-Driven Behavior	Shows humility Is authentic
Pillar 2: Puts People First • Service Driven • Mentor-Minded • Shows Care and Concern	Empowers and develops people
Pillar 3: Skilled Communicator • Empathetic Listening • Invites and Delivers Feedback • Communicates Persuasively	No equivalent characteristic
Pillar 4: Compassionate Collaborator • Builds Teams and Communities • Psychological Safety • First Among Equals	No equivalent characteristic
Pillar 5: Foresight • Visionary • Anticipates Consequences • Takes Courageous, Decisive Action	Provides direction
Pillar 6: Systems Thinker • Comfortable with Complexity • Effectively Leads Change • Stewardship	Stewards who work for the good of the whole
Pillar 7: Moral Authority • Shares Power and Control • Creates a Culture of Accountability	Empowers and develops people

*Note: Some terminology was adapted to increase consistency with VHA values and vernacular.

In addition to being comprehensive as well as behaviorally based, the Seven Pillars of Servant Leadership model was consistent with our other goals. Specifically, the model fit with the VHA values and vernacular and therefore, needed the least amount of adaptation. It was largely free from religious references and potentially problematic language. This 7-factor model also seemed to represent relatively distinct characteristics which appeared easy to understand and remember. Finally, the model came with a companion book that offered useful content for leaders interested in supplemental self-guided learning and additional reflection on their assessment feedback. It should be noted that van Dierendonck's (2011) model met many of these goals as well, but it did not have an associated resource for leaders.

In sum, we sought to move away from servant leadership philosophy and toward a learnable and teachable set of practices (Brown & Bryant, 2015), and determined that Sipe and Frick's (2009) Seven Pillars of Servant Leadership model, developed specifically as a competency-based framework outlining concrete skills, behaviors, and actions that are representative of servant leadership characteristics, was best suited to help us achieve this.

Existing Servant Leadership Assessments. Once the Seven Pillars of Servant Leadership model (Sipe & Frick, 2009) was selected as the framework for servant leadership in the VHA, we searched the literature for a multi-rater, behaviorally-oriented assessment consistent with their model that would not incur a fee for its use. While many servant leadership assessments exist, currently there is no one broadly accepted measure or gold standard for assessing servant leadership. Green, Rodriguez, Wheeler, and Baggerly-Hinojosa (2015) reported six existing servant leadership assessments with sufficient psychometric evaluation presented in peer-reviewed journals. We reviewed the five assessments available to the public, and an additional four servant leadership assessments not included in their review (summarized in Table 3), and encountered similar barriers that were evident during our search for a model of servant leadership.

Table 3: Servant Leadership Assessments Identified for Fit**

Laub (1999)*	Barbuto & Wheeler (2006)	Reed et al (2011)
Page & Wong (2000)	Whittington, et al (2006)*	Van Dierendonck & Nuijten (2011)
Erhart (2004)	Liden et al (2008)	
Dennis & Bocarnea (2005)	Sendjaya et al (2008)*	

*Assessments could not be reviewed because items were not published in peer-reviewed journals or available at no cost.
**Review took place in September 2012, therefore assessments published after this date were not included.

Not behaviorally based. Given that a consistent criticism across the many servant leadership models is their blending of antecedents, behaviors, and outcomes of servant leadership, it is not surprising that the majority of the reviewed assessments reflected this limitation as well. The most useful questionnaires request feedback about specific behaviors rather than asking for general judgments (Lepsinger & Lucia, 2009). While many of the assessment items were behavioral, most assessments included potentially problematic non-behavioral items, such as "My leader knows I am above corruption" (Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005), "This person has great awareness of what is going on" (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006), or "Prefers serving others to being served by others" (Reed et al., 2011).

Factor structure. One of the greatest problems with servant leadership assessments is the lack of factorial validity. It is not surprising that many assessments have factor structures that cannot be replicated given the lack of conceptual clarity around servant leadership. van Dierendonck (2011) reported

two available measures with a stable factor structure across multiple samples that cover the majority of the key servant leadership characteristics: Liden et al. (2008) and van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011). Unfortunately, neither of these met our needs in their entirety based on our criteria. Namely, they were not designed as a multi-rater assessment, were not completely behavioral in nature, were not consistent with the vernacular of the VHA, and did not offer an associated resource to leaders.

Lack of multi-rater assessments. Schriesheim, Castro, and Yammarino (2000) argued that leadership involves both leaders and followers, and servant leadership should be investigated from the perspectives of both leaders and followers. Liden, Wayne, Zhao & Henderson (2008) noted the lack of multi-rater assessments, and described the need for the construction of a supervisor version of the servant leadership scale (Liden et al., 2008). Our review of existing servant leadership assessments revealed one of the most commonly referenced multi-rater servant leadership assessment is the Organizational Leadership Assessment (Laub, 1999). This assessment was the first measure of servant leadership and can be useful to determine to what extent an organization has a servant leadership culture (van Dierendonck, 2011). Unfortunately, the Organizational Leadership Assessment is not well suited for our needs, as it was primarily meant to measure servant leadership at the organizational (rather than the individual leader) level (Dennis et al., 2010), has no stable factor structure (van Dierendonck, 2011), is not easily actionable and it does not fit with the VHA's vernacular. Finally, Laub's assessment involves financial costs, which quickly becomes prohibitive given that there are approximately 22,000 leaders in the VHA system.

Limitations of Leading Servant Leadership Assessments. As previously discussed, the Servant Leadership Scale (i.e., SL-28; Liden et al., 2008) and the Servant Leadership Survey designed by van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011) are the only existing servant leadership assessments with a stable factor structure across multiple samples (van Dierendonck, 2011). For this reason, we carefully considered each of these assessments as the potential tool of choice for our envisioned leadership development program. Unfortunately, these assessments were created as research tools, developed to help clarify the construct of servant leadership, to discriminate it from other forms of leadership, accurately measure it in the most succinct way possible, and use it to explore associated individual, group, and organizational outcomes. These instruments serve an extremely important purpose, as they help to advance servant leadership as a viable and unique field of leadership with valuable organizational and societal outcomes. However, they were not developed with the leader as the end user in mind, and the consequences of this make them inadequate within the context of an applied leadership

development tool. While these measures share the same limitations outlined above (i.e., not behaviorally based, not comprehensive, no multi-rater version available), we will briefly explore their most obvious shortcomings as leadership development tools in more detail given they served as the most likely alternatives to developing a new tool.

Servant Leadership Scale. The biggest barrier to using Liden et al.'s (2008) Servant Leadership Scale (SL-28) is that it was clearly developed for research purposes, designed specifically to "define and validate the dimensions that constitute servant leadership as a construct" (p. 162). While the assessment includes items that may lend themselves well to the demonstration of divergent validity, it is not comprehensive enough for a leadership development program. Specifically, it is heavily focused on the 'people' side of servant leadership, such as serving, empathy, and listening, and generally excludes the 'leader' aspects of servant leadership, such as providing direction, ensuring accountability, and expressing strong stewardship (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). These excluded leader aspects are not only important to leaders seeking to develop their leadership skills, but are also included in Greenleaf's original writings about servant leadership. With our goal of providing a comprehensive tool to develop leaders' servant leadership abilities, it was important that we include both the 'people' and 'leader' aspects of servant leadership.

The SL-28 (Liden et al., 2008) also posed additional limitations that precluded its selection as our assessment tool. Specifically, items were not all behaviorally oriented (e.g., "My manager can tell if something is going wrong;" Liden et al., 2008, p. 168) and it was not based on a theoretical model and therefore was not descriptive enough to easily create a useful feedback report for leaders. Additionally, it was not designed as a multi-rater feedback tool, so items did not all lend themselves well to peer and supervisor audiences (e.g, "My manager wants to know about my career goals;" Liden et al., 2008, p. 168). In fact, Liden et al. (2008) recognized this limitation, calling for a supervision version of the Servant Leadership Scale as an area of future research.

Recently, in order to continue to improve the applicability and ease of use of their tools for research purposes, Liden, et al. (2015) examined and published a short version of the 28 –item Servant Leadership Scale (Liden's et al., 2008): the Servant Leadership-7 Scale. This tool was published after the development of our instrument and is even less appropriate for leadership development than the SL-28 version. While likely quite useful for research purposes due to its brevity, and globalized approach to the servant leadership construct, it simply does not contain

enough information to be useful to a leader looking for specific strategies to improve their servant leadership behaviors.

Servant Leadership Survey. van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011) attempted to address the shortcomings of Liden et al.'s (2008) SL-28 by creating the first servant leadership tool that assessed the 'leader' aspects of the construct in addition to the 'servant' aspects. Additionally, they intended to create a behaviorally oriented tool that was easy to use. Therefore, we carefully considered using this tool in the context of our desire to create a behaviorally-based, multi-rater comprehensive feedback tool for application in leadership development. Although the authors express the importance of behaviorally-focused assessment items, it was our opinion, upon review of their items, that not all of the items met this criterion, but instead would require followers to make assumptions about the internal state of the leader (e.g., "My manager is often touched by the things he/she sees happening around him/her", "My manager finds it difficult to forget things that went wrong in the past," and "If people express criticism, my manager tries to learn from it;" van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011, p. 256). Furthermore, similar to Liden et al. (2008), this tool was not designed to be a 360-degree assessment, so the items did not lend themselves well to easy adaptation for multiple audiences (e.g., "My manager shows his/her true feeling to his/her staff;" van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011, p. 256).

Summary. The limitations of existing servant leadership assessments outlined above posed a significant challenge in the VHA's journey to measure and develop servant leaders. We were seeking a theory-driven multi-rater behaviorally focused assessment consistent with the VHA values and vernacular, preferably with an associated resource (e.g. readily accessible book to explain and illustrate the concepts of the model to the VHA leaders). Sipe and Frick's (2009) The Seven Pillars of Servant Leadership model was specifically designed as a behaviorally-based model that lent itself to leadership development, and was comprehensive yet succinct with 7 factors. In addition, of all the models reviewed, it needed the least amount of adaptation to be consistent with the VHA values and vernacular. Unfortunately, their model did not have an existing assessment developed specifically for it, and after a thorough review, it was determined that there are no existing multi-rater assessments that would fit the needs of the VHA's culture change effort. As such, it became evident that we needed to develop an assessment based on The Seven Pillars of Servant Leadership model (Sipe & Frick, 2009) in order to meet our goal of providing a behaviorally-based 360-degree developmental tool that could provide actionable information to guide the VHA employees' development as servant leaders.

METHOD

Instrument Development

DeVellis' (2012) guidelines in scale development (see Table 4) were used to guide the development of a multi-rater assessment based on The Seven Pillars of Servant Leadership model (Sipe & Frick, 2009). The first step, determine clearly what you want to measure, necessitated slight adaptations of Sipe and Frick's (2009) model. These modifications were minimal, and included changing titles of sub-competencies to be more clear or eliminating perceived redundant sub-competencies. (e.g., changed the sub-competency "Serves a Higher Purpose" to "Engages in Value-Driven Behavior").

Table 4: DeVellis' (2003) Guidelines for Scale Development

1. Determine clearly what it is you want to measure
2. Generate the item pool
3. Determine the format for measurement
4. Have initial items reviewed by a panel of experts
5. Consider inclusion of validation items
6. Administer items to administrative sample
7. Evaluate the items
8. Optimize the scale

After the modifications to the model were finalized, we used Sipe and Frick's (2009) content as well as other resources to clearly operationalize and write a specific definition for each competency and sub-competency. This would act as a necessary guide as we generated items to measure each competency. We began item generation by considering all available items from all available servant leadership measures for fit with Sipe and Frick's (2009) Seven Pillars of Servant Leadership model. Seven existing instruments with a total of 246 items were considered for fit (see Table 5 below). A team of two raters, who are knowledgeable in the area of servant leadership, independently sorted all items to fit within an existing sub-competency of the model as potential items to assess the corresponding sub-competency. This process yielded 84% agreement in item fit. Next, the two raters reviewed all disagreements from the initial sorting process, which were discussed and resolved (often by discarding the item). Once there was agreement on all items, the list of items was reviewed and redundant items were discarded.

Table 5: Servant Leadership Assessments Used for Original Item Pool

Page & Wong (2000)	Barbuto & Wheeler (2006)	Van Dierendonck & Nuijten (2011)
Erhart (2004)	Liden et al (2008)	
Dennis & Bocarnea (2005)	Reed et al (2011)	

Next, a three-person team of individuals who had advanced knowledge in servant leadership reviewed all remaining items for fit, with the goal of reducing the overall pool to less than 100 items in order to make the assessment more manageable for study participants. In addition, two individuals from the research branch of the VHA National Center for Organization Development (NCOD) reviewed the items to ensure they had face validity, which led to further revisions. After this stage, the scale consisted of 99 items, with 41 remaining from the existing servant leadership assessments outlined in Table 3.

To evaluate model fit and to empirically reduce the total number of items, a sample of 43 individuals (24 doctorate-level; 11 masters-level education) who were not knowledgeable about servant leadership were asked to evaluate the items' fit based specifically on the model and the definitions of the model competencies that had been generated prior to item selection. Respondents were provided with: 1) the name of the servant leadership sub-competency and 2) a definition of that sub-competency, and were then asked to rate how well each item reflected the sub-competency on a Likert scale of 1 (not at all representative) to 4 (very representative). For example, each respondent was presented with the sub-competency of "Demonstrates Humility," the accompanying definition: "Keeps their talent and accomplishments in perspective, remains other-focused, acknowledges mistakes, and asks for help when needed," and asked to rate how representative the item, "This individual readily admits when he/she is wrong" was of the sub-competency.

Feedback from this process was used to further reduce the number of items from 99 to 60 (7 items, 12% remained from existing servant leadership assessments) based on the strength of fit with the model definitions. In line with the direction of DeVellis' (2012) Guidelines in Scale Development, a review by a jury of nationally-recognized experts on servant leadership was used to evaluate whether the remaining 60 items, as well as the assessment as a whole, were accurately capturing the concept of servant leadership. We used their feedback to revise, eliminate, and generate new items, which resulted in a 61 item final pilot instrument, with 4 items (7%) remaining from the existing servant leadership assessments.

Prior to administration to our pilot sample, a 28-page interpretive report was created to present the individualized feedback results to the leader being assessed.

The report included a general introduction to servant leadership and the Seven Pillars model, definitions of each pillar, a user-friendly presentation of their personal feedback data, responses from each rater group on all items, a section with verbatim comments about the leader's strengths and areas for development, questions to guide reflection, a personal development plan template, and a recommended reading list.

Assessment Administration Process

To evaluate the VHA Servant Leadership 360-Degree Assessment (VHA SL360), it was administered to the VHA supervisors as part of a multi-rater feedback process offered by the VHA National Center for Organization Development (NCOD) beginning in 2015. Although a small percentage of the leaders independently self-selected to participate in the pilot upon hearing of the opportunity, the majority participated as part of existing (not servant leadership specific) leadership development programs, new leader orientation programs, or workplace improvement efforts. In order to be eligible to participate, leaders were asked to be the supervisor of at least 5 direct reports, and to invite feedback from at least 1 boss, 5 peers, and complete a self-assessment. Employees without formal supervisory responsibility who were interested in gaining feedback from bosses and peers were able to participate upon request.

All respondents completed the assessment online. Raters were asked to provide feedback on the individual's behaviors by providing a rating on each of the 61-items in response to the prompt: "Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements as descriptions of the person you are rating." A 5-point Likert scale was used with 1 indicating strongly disagree to 5, which indicated that the rater strongly agreed that the item was a good description of the person being rated. An option of "skill not observed" was also provided.

Approximately 8 weeks after the assessment start date, participants received the interpretive report and were offered the opportunity to engage in a consultation/coaching session to review their results and create a personal development plan, if they desired to do so.

Participants

Data were obtained on 297 supervisory level employees who received ratings from peers, staff, and supervisors during 2015, resulting in a sample of 3,971 cases. Forty-six percent of the ratings were obtained from the staff, 43% from peers, and 10% from bosses. Raters were mostly between the ages of 50-59 (33%) and 40-49 (28%), and 55% of the raters were female. Additionally, 27% of the raters had been

with the VA for 5-10 years, 25% for more than 20 years, and 15% between 10-15 years. Of the participants being rated, 34% were between the ages of 40-49; 32% between 50-59; 56% were female; 37% had been with the VA between 5-10 years, 20% for more than 20 years, and 18% between 10-15 years. Out of the participants, 90% had some formal supervisory role (first line supervisor, manager, or executive), whereas 57% of the raters possessed formal supervisory responsibilities.

Analysis

Psychometric evaluation of the measurement model was conducted using the "lavaan" package within the "R" statistical software program (R Core Team, 2014; Rosseel, 2012). Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) procedures were employed to evaluate the plausibility of the proposed model, in addition to several competing models. One of the competing models was derived from an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and subsequently tested with a CFA. Due to the categorical nature of Likert-type data, a robust maximum likelihood (MLR) estimation procedure was chosen for the CFA over the default maximum likelihood (ML). The MLR estimator is more suitable for categorical data than the default (ML), and results in a more accurate estimation of the model (Muthén & Muthén, 2015; Rhemtulla, Brosseau-Liard, & Savalei, 2012). Missing data were handled with Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML), where cases with partial data were preserved and used in the analysis (Enders & Bandalos, 2001). This technique is preferred over the default listwise deletion (where such cases would be dropped from the analysis, resulting in a reduced sample size) when data are assumed to be Missing at Random (Rubin, 1976).

To test the existence of seven pillars in our measure, a seven factor model was evaluated against several competing models through CFA. As a first step we estimated a one factor model. Next, we estimated a model with two factors where the first factor loaded onto items from Pillars 1, 2, and 3, and the second factor loaded onto items from Pillars 4, 5, 6, and 7; splitting the instrument in half. The theoretical seven factor model, where the seven pillars are allowed to load on their respective items, was estimated next. Additionally, a three factor model derived from an EFA was also considered as a competing model and therefore estimated in our analysis (see Table 6). An oblique rotation was used within the EFA to interpret the factor loadings, resulting in the extraction of three meaningful factors based on the recommendations of Guadagnoli and Velicer (1988). Table 6 presents the factor loadings obtained from the EFA. Construct validity of the model was assessed through convergent and discriminant validity by correlating the seven factor latent scores with the Ehrhart's servant leadership scale (Ehrhart, 2004) and the Leader-

Member Exchange scale (LMX; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). LMX ratings were obtained from staff members only; therefore, discriminant validity analysis was conducted on this subset of respondents.

Table 6: EFA Factor Loadings

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
33. Reacts compassionately to employees' mistakes.	.94		
17. Demonstrates the philosophy that caring about people brings out the best in them.	.87		
36. Creates an environment in which employees feel like they work with, not for, him/her.	.87		
16. Takes time to connect with employees on a personal level.	.84		
31. Creates an environment in which employees feel safe bringing up questions or concerns.	.84		
18. Acts in a way that shows he/she cares about employees.	.82		
56. Trusts employees to make decisions instead of just telling them what to do.	.80		
22. Welcomes feedback from employees.	.78		
32. Encourages employees to speak up within the group.	.78		
27. Communicates in a way that relies on influence rather than positional power.	.77		
6. Is humble in his/her interactions with others.	.76		
34. Demonstrates the belief that all employees add value to the organization.	.76		
20. Seeks to understand employees' experience when listening to them.	.74		
25. Communicates in a way that inspires others.	.73		
55. Demonstrates that empowering others is important to him/her as a leader.	.71		
26. Connects his/her message to things that are meaningful to employees.	.70		
29. Creates a sense of community at work.	.70		
57. Gives employees the autonomy they need to do their jobs.	.69		
23. Actively seeks opportunities to express deserved recognition and praise to employees.	.69		
24. Communicates in a way that guides employees to come to new insights.	.66		
30. Develops an environment that supports civility.	.65		
15. Works hard at finding ways to help others be the best they can be.	.64		
14. Takes an active interest in employees' own goals for development.	.64		
21. Delivers difficult feedback in a way that helps employees grow.	.62		
28. Encourages team members to help one another.	.62		
5. Readily admits when he/she is wrong.	.60		
35. Treats everyone fairly regardless of their level in the organization.	.60		
19. Listens attentively to others.	.59		
37. Incorporates employee input in the vision for the organization.	.56		
48. Considers employee reactions to change when leading change efforts in the organization.	.56		
7. Readily shares credit with others.	.51		
4. Acts in a way that makes employees trust him/her.	.49		.40
12. Makes serving others a priority.	.46		
13. Inspires a service-focused culture.	.45		
11. Serves others willingly with no expectation of reward.	.40		

Table 6 (continued): EFA Factor Loadings

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
43. Does not hesitate to take decisive action when needed.		.88	
44. Takes action to shape the future rather than waiting for events to happen.		.86	
48. Effectively guides the organization through complex problems.		.75	
39. Pays attention to emerging information that might affect the organization.		.73	
41. Balances concern for day-to-day details with the long-term success of the organization.		.73	
42. Displays an understanding of how this organization's past and present connect to its future.		.72	
40. Is skilled at anticipating the consequences of decisions.		.71	
46. Demonstrates a thorough understanding of how things are connected in our organization.		.70	
58. Ensures people are held accountable for the work they do.		.68	
38. Articulates a compelling vision for the organization's future.		.65	
45. Takes risks to do what he/she believes is right for the organization and its employees.		.64	
50. Provides effective leadership in guiding changes in the organization.		.61	
59. Works with employees to set clear performance standards.		.58	
47. Considers the impact of his/her leadership decisions on the organization as a whole.		.56	
52. Helps our organization contribute to the greater good.		.55	
61. Encourages employees to hold each other accountable.		.54	
51. Leads by example during change efforts in the organization.		.50	
1. Can be counted on to do what she/he says she/he will do.		.47	
54. Has helped to make the organization a better place.		.45	
53. Helps employees see the ways in which this organization contributes to society.		.43	
2. Would not compromise ethical principles in order to achieve success.			.58
3. Shows that he/she is more concerned about doing what is right than looking good.			.53
9. Demonstrates leadership that is driven by values that go beyond his/her self-interests.			.51
8. Practices behavior guided by positive values.			.48
60. Models the behaviors in which employees are expected to engage.			
10. Goes above and beyond to serve others.			

RESULTS

Servant Leadership Measurement Model

Results from the CFA model estimation suggest the seven factor model as the most plausible model (see Table 7A). A reduction in AIC (AIC = 188,294) and BIC (BIC = 189,449) can be observed from the results in Table 7A between the seven factor model and competing models. Additionally, other fit indices such as Chi-Square ($\chi^2_{(1,748)}$ = 8,504), RMSEA ($RMSEA$ = .04), CFI (CFI = .91), TLI (TLI = .91), and SRMR ($SRMR$ = .03) are all preferred in the seven pillar model over the competing models.

In evaluating overall quality of the seven factor model, RMSEA and SRMR are within acceptable standards of good fit, where values of RMSEA below .07 and SRMR below .08 are recommended (Hu & Bentler, 1999). For absolute fit indices such as the TLI, values above .90 have been traditionally considered as desirable (Bentler & Bonett, 1980); although recent evidence suggests .95 as a more appropriate rule of thumb (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Because our CFI and TLI values do not fall within the recently emerging acceptable standards of fit, model optimization was conducted to improve model fit. Specifically, we examined

modification indices for suggestions on where the model could be modified to improve fit. All decisions regarding the modification of the measurement model were based both on the modification indices and theoretical considerations.

As a first step, modification indices were examined to determine if any items were misspecified to load on a wrong factor. The first three items from factor 7 (items 55-57) were moved to factor 4, and the first item from factor 6 (item 46) was moved to factor 5. This resulted in improved model fit ($\chi^2_{(1,748)}$ = 8,298, AIC = 187,942, BIC = 189,097, $RMSEA$ = .04, CFI = .92, TLI = .91, $SRMR$ = .04) (Table 7B).

Table 7A: Fit Indices of Competing CFA Models

Model	$\chi^2_{(df)}$	χ^2/df	RMSEA	SRMR	AIC	BIC	CFI	TLI
1 Factor	$23,361_{(1,769)}$	13.2	.06	.05	366,385	367,535	.84	.83
2 Factors	$20,437_{(1,768)}$	11.6	.05	.05	361,567	362,724	.86	.85
3 Factors	$16,924_{(1,766)}$	9.6	.05	.04	355,764	356,934	.89	.88
7 Factors[+]	$14,051_{(1,748)}$	8.0	.04	.04	351,012	352,294	.91	.90

Table 7B: Fit Indices from Improving 7 Pillar Model Fit

Model	χ^2 (df)	χ^2/df	RMSEA	SRMR	AIC	BIC	CFI	TLI
7 Factors[+]	$14,051_{(1,748)}$	8.0	.04	.04	351,012	352,294	.91	.90
Rearranged Item Loadings	$13,633_{(1,748)}$	7.8	.04	.04	350,336	351,618	.91	.91
Exclusion of 2 Items	$12,021_{(1,711)}$	7.0	.04	.03	338,979	340,224	.91	.91
Relaxing 5 Covariance Restrictions	$9,931_{(1,626)}$	6.1	.04	.03	335,557	336,833	.93	.93

[+]Original Theoretical Model

*Removed item "*Incorporates employee input in the vision for the organization* " and "*Models the behaviors in which employees are expected to engage* "

Next, modification indices were again examined to determine if the model could further be optimized by removal of cross-loading items. One item from factor 3 ("*Incorporates employee input in the vision for the organization*") and one item from factor 5 ("*Models the behaviors in which employees are expected to engage*") were removed, resulting in good model fit ($\chi^2_{(1,631)}$ = 7,405, AIC = 182,579, BIC = 183,702, $RMSEA$ = .04, CFI = .92, TLI = .92, $SRMR$ = .03). Finally, five pairs of items were allowed to correlate (item 56 with 57, item 14 with 15, item 43 with 44, item 10 with 12, and item 19 with 20) based on modification indices and item wording review, resulting in the final model ($\chi^2_{(1,626)}$ = 6,582, AIC = 181,141, BIC = 182,292, $RMSEA$ = .04, CFI = .93, TLI = .93, $SRMR$ = .03) (see Table 8).

Table 8: Final Model Factor Loadings and Item Desciptives

Factor Name	Item	Mean	SD	Standardized Loadings	Z-Value
Person of Character	1. Can be counted on to do what she/he says she/he will do.	4.57	.71	.50	28.66
	2. Would not compromise ethical principles in order to achieve success.	4.61	.71	.54	30.11
	3. Shows that he/she is more concerned about doing what is right than looking good.	4.46	.81	.66	38.30
	4. Acts in a way that makes employees trust him/her.	4.35	.88	.76	46.35
	5. Readily admits when he/she is wrong.	4.20	.89	.69	43.46
	6. Is humble in his/her interactions with others.	4.28	.88	.67	42.50
	7. Readily shares credit with others.	4.46	.78	.57	35.32
	8. Practices behavior guided by positive values.	4.53	.69	.58	37.64
	9. Demonstrates leadership that is driven by values that go beyond his/her self-interests.	4.46	.79	.68	41.23
Puts People First	10. Goes above and beyond to serve others.	4.37	.76	.62	41.10
	11. Serves others willingly with no expectation of reward.	4.40	.74	.59	40.92
	12. Makes serving others a priority.	4.31	.77	.62	44.91
	13. Inspires a service-focused culture.	4.37	.76	.60	41.18
	14. Takes an active interest in employees' own goals for development.	4.25	.89	.70	43.76
	15. Works hard at finding ways to help others be the best they can be.	4.20	.87	.72	49.66
	16. Takes time to connect with employees on a personal level.	4.23	.90	.70	41.49
	17. Demonstrates the philosophy that caring about people brings out the best in them.	4.23	.85	.75	52.94
	18. Acts in a way that shows he/she cares about employees.	4.34	.83	.72	45.34
Skilled Communicator	19. Listens attentively to others.	4.35	.79	.57	36.36
	20. Seeks to understand employees' experience when listening to them.	4.28	.81	.64	43.01
	21. Delivers difficult feedback in a way that helps employees grow.	4.15	.88	.68	47.62
	22. Welcomes feedback from employees.	4.27	.83	.65	44.14
	23. Actively seeks opportunities to express deserved recognition and praise to employees.	4.34	.80	.59	38.59
	24. Communicates in a way that guides employees to come to new insights.	4.17	.83	.70	52.19
	25. Communicates in a way that inspires others.	4.08	.91	.79	59.13
	26. Connects his/her message to things that are meaningful to employees.	4.17	.82	.70	49.99
	27. Communicates in a way that relies on influence rather than positional power.	4.21	.91	.76	50.30
Compassionate Collaborator	55. Demonstrates that empowering others is important to him/her as a leader.	4.29	.84	.70	44.83
	56. Trusts employees to make decisions instead of just telling them what to do.	4.27	.87	.67	39.60
	57. Gives employees the autonomy they need to do their jobs.	4.35	.81	.60	35.00
	28. Encourages team members to help one another.	4.42	.72	.52	33.53
	29. Creates a sense of community at work.	4.25	.86	.69	44.72
	30. Develops an environment that supports civility.	4.40	.78	.62	39.14
	31. Creates an environment in which employees feel safe bringing up questions or concerns.	4.30	.87	.74	46.01
	32. Encourages employees to speak up within the group.	4.32	.79	.63	41.86
	33. Reacts compassionately to employees' mistakes.	4.18	.86	.67	43.23
	34. Demonstrates the belief that all employees add value to the organization.	4.32	.78	.63	41.29
	35. Treats everyone fairly regardless of their level in the organization.	4.37	.85	.70	40.97
	36. Creates an environment in which employees feel like they work with, not for, him/her.	4.25	.94	.80	50.21
Has Foresight	46. Demonstrates a thorough understanding of how things are connected in our organization.	4.40	.74	.55	35.91
	38. Articulates a compelling vision for the organization's future.	4.18	.86	.69	47.43
	39. Pays attention to emerging information that might affect the organization.	4.46	.69	.54	37.60
	40. Is skilled at anticipating the consequences of decisions.	4.27	.82	.67	45.34
	41. Balances concern for day-to-day details with the long-term success of the organization.	4.29	.77	.66	46.83
	42. Displays an understanding of how this organization's past and present connect to its future	4.30	.77	.64	44.63
	43. Does not hesitate to take decisive action when needed.	4.38	.82	.58	34.83
	44. Takes action to shape the future rather than waiting for events to happen.	4.30	.82	.66	43.70
	45. Takes risks to do what he/she believes is right for the organization and its employees.	4.26	.84	.63	40.07
Systems Thinker	47. Considers the impact of his/her leadership decisions on the organization as a whole.	4.31	.79	.65	45.18
	48. Considers employee reactions to change when leading change efforts in the organization.	4.30	.79	.67	47.24
	48. Effectively guides the organization through complex problems.	4.18	.84	.68	45.24
	50. Provides effective leadership in guiding changes in the organization.	4.25	.83	.74	51.75
	51. Leads by example during change efforts in the organization.	4.33	.80	.70	46.60
	52. Helps our organization contribute to the greater good.	4.48	.67	.56	39.27
	53. Helps employees see the ways in which this organization contributes to society.	4.26	.77	.60	42.41
	54. Has helped to make the organization a better place.	4.49	.77	.64	37.86
Leads With Moral Authority	58. Ensures people are held accountable for the work they do.	4.24	.87	.70	39.58
	59. Works with employees to set clear performance standards.	4.24	.84	.70	42.77
	61. Encourages employees to hold each other accountable.	4.20	.85	.68	43.33

Results from the construct validity analysis between the Ehrhart (2004) and LMX (staff only; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) scales and the seven pillar model demonstrate some evidence for convergent and discriminant validity (Table 9). The seven servant leadership pillars all demonstrated higher correlations with the Ehrhart (2004) measure of servant leadership than they did with the LMX scale. The average correlation of the seven pillars with the Ehrhart (2004) measure was $r = .86$, while the average correlation with the LMX scale was $r = .80$. The largest differences between the Ehrhart and the LMX correlations with the seven pillars were observed for the *Has Foresight* (Ehrhart $r = .83$; LMX $r = .76$), *Systems*

Thinker (Ehrhart $r = .88$; LMX $r = .81$), and *Leads with Moral Authority* (Ehrhart $r = .80$; LMX $r = .73$) pillars.

Table 9: Convergent and Discriminant Validity of the Seven Pillar Model

Servant Leadership Pillars	Staff		Bosses		Peers	
	Ehrhart SL	LMX	Ehrhart SL	LMX	Ehrhart SL	LMX
1. Person of Character	.86	.83	.76	-	.82	-
2. Puts People First	.89	.83	.80	-	.85	-
3. Skilled Communicator	.89	.83	.79	-	.85	-
4. Compassionate Collaborator	.89	.84	.79	-	.85	-
5. Has Foresight	.83	.76	.73	-	.79	-
6. Systems Thinker	.88	.81	.79	-	.83	-
7. Leads with Moral Authority	.80	.73	.64	-	.76	-

Exploratory Analysis

Differences on the SL factors were examined between rater types for the purpose of an exploratory analysis. Results presented in Table 10 show mean standardized factor scores for Boss, Peer, and Staff ratings on each of the seven pillars. Additionally, confidence intervals are provided to highlight statistically significant differences between raters. Results show Staff as generally providing lower scores than Peers and Bosses on all factors except Compassionate Collaborator. The largest differences appeared on Person of Character ratings, where the average Staff ratings were significantly lower than Boss ($t(480) = 3.43$, $p < .001$) and Peer ratings ($t(1,827) = 3.01$, $p < .01$).

Table 10: Servant Leadership Factor Means[1] by Rater Groups

	Boss ($n = 408$)	Peer ($n = 1,704$)	Staff ($n = 1,859$)
Person of Character (95% *CI*)	.22 (.15-.29)	.16 (.12-.20)	.02 (-.03-.07)[B***P**]
Puts People First (95% CI)	.18 (.11-.26)	.18 (.13-.22)	.07 (.02-.12)[B*P*]
Skilled Communicator (95% CI)	.14 (.07-.21)	.19 (.14-.23)	.09 (.04-.14)[P*]
Compassionate Collaborator (95% CI)	.17 (.10-.23)	.16 (.12-.21)	.08 (.03-.13)
Has Foresight (95% CI)	.10 (.02-.18)	.21 (.17-.25)	.11 (.06-.16)[P*]
Systems Thinker (95% CI)	.17 (.10-.25)	.19 (.15-.24)	.09 (.04-.14)[P*]
Leads with Moral Authority (95% CI)	.15 (.08-.23)	.20 (.15-.24)	.07 (.02-.12)[P**]

[B] Significantly different from Bosses

[P] Significantly different from Peers

* Significant at p < .05

** Significant at p < .01

*** Significant at p < .001

[1] SL factor means computed from final model and standardized to a mean of 0 in the full sample

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this paper is to describe Veterans Health Administration's journey to create a culture of servant leadership, with the hope it can serve as a useful blueprint for other organizations interested in embedding servant leadership into their cultures and leadership practices. Specifically, we outlined the step-by-step process we took to create and validate a multi-rater tool based on Sipe and Frick's (2009) Seven Pillars of Servant Leadership model.

Results indicate that this newly-created multi-rater assessment accurately captures Sipe and Frick's (2009) seven dimension model of servant leadership. Analyses revealed the seven factor model emerged as the best fitting model when compared to alternative factor groupings. All fit indices reached acceptable levels for demonstrating good model fit, suggesting that the composition of latent constructs within our data can be represented by the seven pillar structure. Although the original theoretical seven pillar structure was identified in the data, the model was further improved by reassigning four items under different pillars and dropping two items. Items 55, 56, and 57 ("*Demonstrates that empowering others is important to him/her as a leader*", "*Trusts employees to make decisions instead of just telling them what to do*", and "*Gives employees the autonomy they need to do their jobs,*" respectively), which originally were a part of the Systems Thinker pillar, were moved under Compassionate Collaborator. Additionally, item 46 ("*Demonstrates a thorough understanding of how things are connected in our organization*") was moved from Systems Thinker to Has Foresight for improved fit. After two items were dropped because of cross-loadings and weak factor representation, similarly worded items were allowed to correlate. These covariances were specified based on item content and modification indices. For instance, items specified to covary were similarly worded items such as "*Listens attentively to others*" and "*Seeks to understand employees' experience when listening to them*".

The items measuring the seven pillars appear to be representative of the definition of the underlying constructs as factor loadings are high and generally above .6 within most pillars. By examining the highest loading items within the pillars, we can define the underlying constructs. For example, the item "*Creates an environment in which employees feel like they work with, not for, him/her*" loads the highest within Compassionate Collaborator. This item gauges the extent to which a leader fosters an environment of collaboration, and is therefore a critical item for the measurement of this construct. Some pillars such as Puts People First, Has Foresight, and Systems Thinker have weaker item representation, as loadings dip to the .5 range. While still acceptable, the construct may not be as well defined for these pillars as the rest of the pillars in the model.

When comparing the servant leadership ratings across different sources, we found patterns of lower scores provided by the staff. Staff ratings were generally lower than both boss and peer ratings on all seven pillars. The pillar of compassionate collaborator was the only score where staff ratings were not significantly different from boss and peer ratings. Largest differences appeared to be on the person of character and leads with moral authority subscales. On the other hand, boss and peer ratings were more similar to each other. Discrepancies between rater types have been noted in the 360-degree feedback literature, so the patterns in our study are consistent with what is expected from other feedback instruments (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). In addition, Harris & Schaubroeck (1988) found relatively high correlations between boss and peer ratings in their meta-analysis, although their study did not include staff ratings. Nevertheless, rating discrepancies are a desirable feature of performance appraisal systems such as our SL360 instrument, as ratees are able to receive broader feedback on their servant leadership behaviors. Multiple perspectives from raters are possible because different types of raters experience different interaction with the ratee. Our finding that staff provides lower ratings on servant leadership behaviors than bosses or peers suggests that staff experience servant leadership behaviors differently.

Limitations of the Present Study

A common concern in latent variable modeling approaches, such as CFA, is the existence of plausible alternative models. Specifically, although our model fits the data, it is possible that an alternative well-fitting model exists under a different latent structure. As an example, although we found weaker support for our EFA derived three factor structure compared to the seven factor model, it is still possible that a more parsimonious model exists. In the interest of confirming the Sipe and Frick (2009) servant leadership model, we specifically focused on improving the fit of the seven factor model, however some researchers may be interested in deriving a simpler model with fewer factors. Parsimonious models may have more relevance in certain applied settings where broader groupings of the servant leadership construct are valued. In the current context, this instrument was designed to provide actionable information for leaders to be able to remember, easily understand, and generate behavioral changes based on the results. For this purpose, clustering the results into seven categories is likely to provide richer, more discrete feedback upon which development can be based.

Another potential shortcoming to our analyses and interpretation of the results is the distribution property of the data. That is, our data appear to be negatively skewed, showing evidence for non-normality. In examining the item means, which range from $M = 4.08$ to $M = 4.61$ on a 1-5 scale, it appears that the ratings are

positively inflated. Further, some skewness values are below -2.0, which is considered a violation of the assumption of normality (West, Finch, & Curran, 1995). This is likely due to the population who took part in the study, many of whom were in high potential leadership programs or self-selected to participate due to a specific interest in servant leadership. To account for this data limitation and to reduce any bias in model estimation, we adopted a robust maximum likelihood (MLR) estimation procedure for our analysis. The MLR estimator is more suitable for non-normal distributions and categorical variables and recovers model parameter estimates with less bias compared to default methods (Muthén & Muthén, 2015; Rhemtulla, Brosseau-Liard, & Savalei, 2012).

Conclusions and Future Directions

This paper contributes to the current servant leadership literature by offering a valid, model-based, multi-rater tool intended to help develop servant leaders. It was specifically and intentionally designed with the end user experience in mind, with the knowledge that the items and the resulting feedback would be presented to the individual being assessed. Therefore, it was essential that the model, instrument, and associated interpretive report be comprehensive, behavioral, and actionable in order to facilitate leaders' development.

Currently there is no one agreed upon definition of servant leadership, which has resulted in numerous conceptualizations and assessments of the construct (van Dierendonck, 2011). Because of this, Brown and Bryant (2015) characterized the current state of the field of servant leadership as being "muddled," because "scholars are speaking different languages" as they "continue to define and redefine servant leadership" (p. 16). It is not our intention for this newly created assessment to add confusion to the literature, but rather to advance the field of servant leadership by providing a publicly available servant leadership multi-rater assessment specifically designed to be applied in the context of developing servant leaders.

The development of leaders through the use of a multi-rater servant leadership assessment is an important initial step in creating a culture of servant leadership; however, the VHA intends to continue the journey towards a culture of servant leadership in a multitude of ways. First, the VHA's National Center for Organization Development (NCOD) recently created a version of this servant leadership multi-rater assessment that is available to employees without direct reports (i.e., the VHA SL180), as it is our philosophy that a formal position of authority is not necessary to be a servant leader. This allows any the VHA employee to receive feedback on behavioral strengths or areas in need of

improvement as they work to embody servant leadership qualities. To assist individuals who are looking to develop a servant leadership style or learn more about it, we created a complementary guidebook aligned with Sipe and Frick's (2009) Seven Pillars of Servant Leadership model, which offers self-directed activities, reflection exercises and additional readings.

Further cementing servant leadership as a driving force in the VHA's culture, the National Leadership Council (i.e., the VHA's governing board) formally recognized servant leadership as the model of choice for leadership in the VHA. While several the VHA leadership programs already use the SL360, this acknowledgement will further encourage broad use of the VHA SL360 across leadership development programs and within the VHA hospitals and program offices. To further support our leaders, NCOD provides in-person servant leadership presentations and coaching for several established leadership development programs.

With the increased interest and focus on servant leadership, there is a need to continue to increase the VHA employees' understanding and acceptance of servant leadership; therefore, NCOD is often called upon by the VHA hospitals, program offices, and even offices in the Department of Veterans Affairs to conduct presentations and workshops on the topic. The main purpose of these workshops is to build awareness of servant leadership as a concept, provide a framework that can help create common language, and generate the desire to engage in servant leadership behaviors.

This paper outlines the early stages of a long culture change journey, with the development of the VHA SL360 as an important initial step towards developing servant leaders. Continued examination of the assessment is planned, including further collection of data to build a normative database against which scores can be compared. Additionally, further analyses and research into the factor structure, validity, reliability, and associated correlates of the tool will be conducted. The deployment of the VHA's next significant and exciting step in its journey is forthcoming: a three-phase program for the VHA leaders interested in enhancing their servant leadership skills. The program begins with foundational knowledge in servant leadership, and includes an opportunity to receive feedback via the VHA SL360 and use assessment results to create an actionable development plan. The second phase includes an experience similar to an Assessment Center during which leaders will have the opportunity to participate in simulated, job-related activities with immediate feedback from peers and trained observers. This customized behavioral feedback will include demonstrated strengths and developmental opportunities for becoming a more effective servant leader. The third phase will

offer support to the VHA leaders as they develop and implement a servant leadership strategy that will help embed servant leadership in their respective hospitals or program offices. This phase will include a change management component, and ongoing consultation from change management coaches will be available to leaders as they work to implement their servant leadership projects.

NCOD will continue to research the impact of all these efforts and more closely examine demographic differences in servant leadership, possible antecedents of servant leadership and the patient, employee, workgroup and organizational outcomes of servant leadership behaviors. These efforts will contribute to the field of servant leadership by improving our multilevel understanding of servant leadership in healthcare settings and sharing empirically supported practices for building a culture of servant leadership. A detailed, guided approach to building a culture of servant leadership is a current gap in the servant leadership literature, and it is our hope that the work we are doing in the VHA can serve as a useful blueprint for other organizations interested in embedding servant leadership into their cultures and leadership practices.

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