



Nurturing a Culture of Hope in Leaders and Organizations in Globally Turbulent Times

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Roundtable: Servant Leadership

This article supports the extended theoretical model initially developed by Patterson (2003), encompassing the seven virtuous constructs of love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service, extended by Winston (2003) to include a circular motion, demonstrating the leader's service that results in a continuous circular motion by positively affecting the followers' Agapao love, commitment, self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation and altruistic attitudes towards their leaders. Cerff and Winston (2006) included the cognitive theory of hope emanating from the field of positive psychology (Shorey & Snyder, 1997) in the conceptual model, as a virtuous construct that is an outcome of both the leader's Agapao love and the follower's Agapao love. Recent marketplace research indicates deliberate initiatives to nurture hope in leaders that continue to influence both leaders and followers in organizations with positive ripple effects in contrast to the erosion of hope. This article will present empirical research that validates the inclusion of hope in the servant leadership model and the pivotal value of hope during turbulent times for leaders and followers alike.

Keywords: servant leadership, culture, hope.

Greenleaf's (1998) definition of servant leadership points out the paradox of the leader, noting:

The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. Then the conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The best test is: do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants (p. 1)?

Greenleaf's definition provides an image of a leadership posture that encompasses high moral values in its motivation and action.

Patterson's (2003) model and Winston's (2003) extended cyclical model make valuable contributions to the theory of servant leadership. However, these do not include a future perspective. Cerff and Winston's (2006) model addresses the future perspective through the inclusion of hope advanced by the leader which is a prerequisite for empowerment and intrinsic motivation.

The global COVID-19 pandemic that gathered momentum from early in 2020 exercised an immediate impact creating turbulence, crisis and multi-layered complexities for leaders and followers, organizations, families, communities, nations, and the world's economy causing irrevocable change and loss. The organizers of the 2021 Servant Leadership Roundtable chose to focus on aspects of servant leadership that would imbue hope and psychological healing, encourage change in organizations and explore how leaders might deliberately focus on followers in leading and serving with excellence.

Anecdotal evidence showed that the unprecedented and far-reaching impact of the global pandemic was continuously uncertain and caused deep concerns with common indications of negative psychological effects on leaders and followers, with a common thread of a loss of hope in many. During the pandemic, the author undertook marketplace research leading to deliberate initiatives to nurture hope in leaders. Deliberate leadership behavior that nurtures hope in leaders and followers across organizations exercises positive ripple effects in turbulent times as well as during the present day. The nature of such leadership behavior contrasts with the erosion of hope commonly encountered.

The alignment between the inclusion of hope in the servant leadership model and the findings of recent marketplace research provides additional insights for aspiring servant leaders as well as for established servant leaders to continuously lead and serve with excellence and innovation.

Literature Review

According to Bass (2000), the principal motivation of transformational leadership is directed toward the achievement of organizational goals. These goals are achieved as followers "transcend their own self-interests for the good of the group, organization or society" (Bass, 1990 p. 53). According to Bass, followers "become aware of what is really important" and "are converted into leaders" (Bass, 1990 p. 53). This perspective contrasts with servant leadership in which the leader places a focus on the well-being of the followers (Bass, 2000; Stone, Russell & Patterson, 2003).

Greenleaf (1998) indicated the paradoxical nature of service in leadership behavior when he noted the need to place emphasis on "prioritizing being servants first, and then leading" (p. 13). Farling (n.d., p. 2) noted the dual service perspective of servant leadership based on an individual being "a servant to both God and others". Snodgrass

(1993, p. 13) supports this perspective, noting that Christians understand their role of being servants on account of the role model of Christ and “servanthood cannot be conjured up by disciplines or special acts”. Cerff (2004a) points out that this view results from an individual’s personal relationship with Christ and “as the character and purposes of Christ become pre-eminent in an individual’s life” (p. 7).

Stone, Russell and Patterson (2003) along with Winston (2002) point out that servant leaders have a high regard for their followers. Winston (2002) calls this high regard, Agapao love, the foundational construct of servant leadership. According to Winston (2003), as the leader practices the seven constructs of servant leadership that reflect the seven beatitudes, this results in an increased focus by the leader on a vision for the followers as well as trust in the followers that, together, causes the leader to increase the level of empowerment to the followers that results in a greater level of service to the follower (p. 4).

As the foundational construct of servant leadership, Agapao love is a thermometer that plays an important role in determining the success of the servant leader in relation to his followers. The extent to which the leader practices Agapao love will determine the extent to which the other six virtues that Patterson (2003) lists are advanced. As a servant leader practices humility, altruism, vision and trust, the followers will necessarily experience increased hope and will be empowered to become highly effective followers who are set for success and future leadership service. Dedicated and effective servant leaders also inspire these virtues in their followers, and the response of their followers to the leader’s behavior is characterized by Agapao love, commitment and hope that will result in increased intrinsic motivation, altruism towards the leader and the leader’s interests, and high levels of service, as a direct consequence.

Servant Leadership Models

Patterson (2003) developed a Servant Leadership Model based on the perspective of servant leadership as a virtuous theory. Patterson notes that “a virtue is a qualitative characteristic that is part of one’s character” and is “almost spiritual” (p. 2). Patterson places an emphasis on the leader’s focus on his followers. Winston (2002) states that the leader’s focus has love as the cornerstone and is advanced through the leader’s service to his followers, his willingness to “learn the giftings and talents” (p. 3) from his followers, and results in servant leaders who “inspire hope and courage” (p. 4). The design of Patterson’s model is unidirectional and illustrates the influence of the “processional pattern” (Patterson, 2003, p. 3) of the leader in relation to the follower.

Winston (2003) added to Patterson’s model and demonstrated “how the leader’s service from Patterson’s model affects the followers’ Agapao love” (p. 1). This led to the development of a circular model of influence and counterinfluence between the leader and follower since the follower’s commitment to the leader, self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, altruism and service are impacted. Winston’s extension of Patterson’s

model also incorporates maturity or spiritual maturity as a moderating variable that is shown as a “circular relationship” (Winston, 2003, p. 8) resulting in an increased or decreased intensity and strength of the spiral model. Neither Patterson’s nor Winston’s model includes a future orientation that results from the inclusion of hope in the model.

Hope Theory

Hope theory has developed in recent years as a cognitive, motivational model. Snyder (1994) built on the work of Averill, Stotland and others, pointing out that “hope reflects an expectation of goal attainment” (p. 536). According to Snyder (1994), hope and optimism share a similar definitional core, “reflecting a positive cognitive set that people have about their outcomes in life” (p. 595). Snyder notes that hope and optimism can be influenced by situational factors or may be the result of an individual’s underlying disposition. According to Snyder, Lopez, Shorey, Rand and Feldman (2003), “hope reflects individuals’ perceptions regarding their capabilities to (a) clearly conceptualize goals, (b) develop the specific strategy to reach those goals (pathways thinking), and (c) initiate and sustain the motivation for using those strategies (agency thinking)” (p. 122-123).

Snyder, Scott and Cheavens (1999) point out that in the hope model, “stress, negative emotions, and difficulties in coping are considered a result of being unable to envision a pathway or make movement toward a desired goal” (p. 181). For leaders, the development of high levels of hope is necessary to be an effective leader (Shorey & Snyder, 2004; Goethals, Sorenson and Burns, 2004; Snyder & Shorey, n.d.).

Snyder (1994) points out the influence of hope on the perspective of individuals, noting that “high versus low hope persons approach their life goals differently” (p. 538). According to Snyder, people with high hope approach their goals with “a sense of challenge”, “focus on succeeding”, have a perception of “a high probability of goal attainment” and have “a positive emotional state” (p. 538). By contrast, people with low hope approach the achievement of their goals with “a sense of ambivalence at best”, “focus on failing rather than succeeding”, have a “perception of low probability of goal attainment” and have “a negative emotional state” (p. 538). Snyder and Shorey (n.d.) clarify the importance of high hope as this relates to leadership, pointing out that high hope people are effective leaders because they “clearly conceptualize goals”, can “articulate these succinct goals to others”, and can “forge sub-goals to complex goals that are large and temporarily distant” (p. 2), thereby indicating that high hope people articulate “pathways thinking” for the achievement of their goals, and “agency thinking” (p. 1) that involves the motivation to implement their goals.

Snyder (1994) argues that goal-directed expectations comprise two cognitive components, namely agency and pathways. Agency “taps the person’s sense of successful determination in meeting goals,” while pathways “taps the person’s perceived capability to generate successful plans to reach goals” (p. 536). Snyder defines

hope as “a cognitive set that is based on a reciprocally derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-directed determination) and (b) pathways (planning of ways to meet goals)” (p. 536). Snyder, Lopez, Shorey, Rand and Feldman (2003) focus on the contribution of school psychologists as “caring coaches” in “helping students, teachers and schools in general to become more hopeful” (p. 122). The importance of equipping individuals to establish attitudes and perceptions that stimulate an environment and habits that encourage high hope is significant as it relates to adolescents and young adults who are in the process of laying down habits for life. Snyder, et al. describe how hope reflects the abilities of individuals to use the strategies of pathways thinking and agency thinking that “are both necessary, but neither by itself is sufficient to sustain successful goal pursuit” (p. 122-123). Snyder, et al. report that findings from various studies indicate that “lower hope predicts more depressive symptoms” and young adults with higher hope “view themselves in a favorable light and have slight positive referential illusions” and “are more optimistic about the future” (p. 125). Snyder, et al. point out, “when hopeful thinking is stymied, interpersonal struggles result” (p. 126), whereas “hopeful thinking can empower and guide a lifetime of learning” (p. 134). These contrasts between low hope and establishing and nurturing high hope indicate the value of achieving high levels of hope in the development of leaders.

Shorey and Shorey (2004) argue that hope “is a common process in leadership models”, and illustrate how “leaders in their coach-roles can instill hope” in their followers, by “having high expectations”, “considering followers’ needs and interests”, “modeling and teaching strategies to achieve personal goals while simultaneously meeting organizational goals”, “being consistent in levels of availability and responsiveness” and “maintaining a positive, affirming, ‘you can do it’, attitude toward followers” (p. 7). These actions and attitudes of high hope leaders have direct, positive effects on followers, namely engendering trust, self-efficacy in followers through the practice of individual consideration of followers, the inspiration of followers to fulfill the belief of their leaders in them, and shared values and culture of leaders and followers.

Goethals, Sorenson and Burns (2004) argue that high hope leaders stimulate agency thinking in their followers and are able “to facilitate the attainment of large goals” (p. 673), thereby demonstrating their effectiveness as leaders. Goethals, et al. conclude that the value of high hope leaders is emphasized in the advantage of high hope thinking as a “robust predictor of successful goal attainments” as well as such leaders providing “positive role models for those people who carry out the many activities that make societies function” (p. 675). Snyder and Shorey (n.d.) indicate the significant contribution of high hope leaders to their followers by modeling hope, and consequently “the followers eventually will be able to take on leadership roles themselves, thereby contributing even more to the group’s success” (p. 2). The utilization of hope as positive psychology has the potential for significant impact on the development of leaders, particularly since hope can be increased.

The Role of Hope in the Development of Leaders

Cerff (2006) supports the role of hope in the development of leaders, and of hope as a future orientation, noting the value of the inclusion of hope as an integral part of leadership development. Cerff (2006) points out that hope “changes the way individuals view themselves, affects what individuals do with their lives, providing power to live courageously and to be all that God intended them to be” (p. 52).

Cerff (2006) notes, “anecdotal evidence and experience indicate that individuals who are practicing Christians embrace more hope in the future than individuals who are non-Christians. This perspective of hope is a key theme in the Bible” (p. 14). Hampton Keathley (2005) supports the future orientation of biblical hope and points out that hope means “trust and a confident expectation” (p. 1). According to Hampton Keathley, hope refers to “the activity of hoping, or to the object hoped for” (p. 1) and deals with both futurity and invisibility. This hope is “the sure certainty that what God has promised in the Word is true, has occurred, and or will in accordance with God’s sure Word” (p. 2), as seen in Romans 8:24-25. Hope is described as “dynamic, active, directive and life sustaining” and if “based on God’s promises, it will put us in gear” (p. 3).

The Inclusion of Hope in the Servant Leadership Model

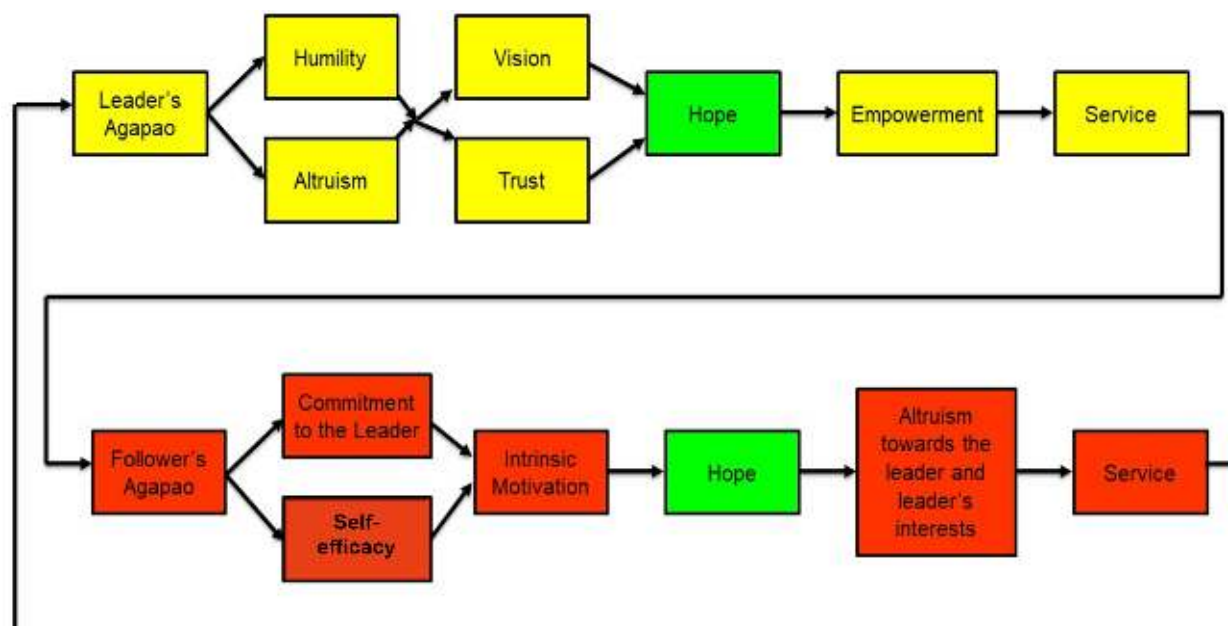
Cerff and Winston (2006) motivated the need for the inclusion of hope in the Servant Leadership model. Figure 1 shows Winston’s (2003) extended model of servant leadership with the inclusion of hope as an outcome of the leader’s Agapao and as a prerequisite for empowerment. In addition, hope is included as an outcome of the follower’s Agapao and enhances the follower’s altruism and service.

The extended model is theoretical in nature, with each construct being practical in its leadership application. Irving (2004) highlighted the need for more research of a quantitative and qualitative nature “to establish a solid research baseline that may be used to inform the practice of servant leadership in contemporary organizations” (p. 2).

Initial Study – from Theory to Practice

By July 2020 it was evident that the emergence and rapid march of the COVID-19 pandemic had left a layered negative impact globally since early 2020, affecting leaders and followers globally in their roles in organizations and economies, while also continuously testing personal leadership character and mental health, in the midst of being buffeted through ongoing losses and the potential of a loss of hope.

Figure 1: *Extended Model of Servant Leadership with the Inclusion of Hope*



(Cerff & Winston, 2006)

Snyder (1996) noted that “hope is an acquisition type of thinking in that it reflects instances in which people perceive that they are capable of progressing toward desired objects. In contrast to the procurement properties of higher hopeful thinking, loss reflects instances in which goal-directed thinking is lessened or curtailed because the goal object (i.e., a thing, experience, or person) is unobtainable” (p. 1). Anecdotal evidence globally indicates higher levels of anxiety and stress, compounded by negative media information and the consequent need for professionals as leaders, coaches and others to be more mindful in their communication and to demonstrate greater self-awareness and higher levels of emotional intelligence in the current day in all their interaction with other leaders and followers (Regent School of Business and Leadership Webinar, August 20, 2020).

Consequently, the author undertook a study comprising a network of over 150 small to medium-sized organizations based predominantly in Southern Africa in December 2020, where the immediate impact of the “loss” as Snyder (1996) noted, was the need for multi-faceted support and services to counteract the loss of business, disillusionment, and consequent disorientation. In addition, leaders and followers expressed the need for the provision of immediate innovation, renewed focus, and momentum to survive and thrive financially in the changing circumstances to ensure their growth in resilience.

Findings of the Initial Study

The findings of the initial study which the author undertook in December 2020 indicated that the elements which participants identified as building blocks in

enhancing their resilience and success as marketplace leaders represented aspects of Snyder's (1994) Hope Theory, in which a close similarity between hope and optimism can be identified. The combination of hope and optimism influence an individual's perspective of their outcomes in life, their underlying disposition, and their perception of their capabilities.

Second Study – Hope against Hope Research

While the author continued to monitor the network over time, the author undertook a second study that focused on the concept of hope against hope, which was undertaken in September 2021. The initial study which focused on encouraging leaders during the early period of the pandemic, was largely business-orientated and incorporated personal aspects. The second study centered around the impact related to leaders' personal lives and their efforts toward personal recovery and the ability to fully re-engage in their business endeavors.

Romans 4:18 states, "Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, so shall your offspring be" (NIV). The concept refers to hope that is against all probability and based on a divine promise. The context refers to Abraham's hope over a period of 25 years while he awaited the fulfillment of God's promise of the birth of his son. Matthew Henry (1701) points out that this perspective is grounded in an understanding of in whom Abraham believed as well as how he believed, noting that Abraham "believed in hope, which arose, as his faith did, from the consideration of God's all-sufficiency" (p. 372).

The aim of the second study was to select leaders who had faced extreme personal circumstances in the recent past and to provide an opportunity to both hear and potentially learn from their responses. The author selected four long-standing clients who had each lost a close relative or loved one during the preceding 18 months, or who had personally endured a near-death COVID-19 related experience. The author conducted a separate coaching interview with each of the participants and analyzed the qualitative data.

Findings of the Second Study – Hope against Hope Research

The findings of the second study indicated that the prolonged pandemic had deeply impacted the resilience of the participants, despite being high hope leaders who had persevered and been successful in extreme business conditions during the pandemic. Their additional personal loss of loved ones, or personal health challenges further exacerbated their resilience and ability to successfully lead their organizations with the necessary energy, positivity, and high hope. In some cases, they needed to recover physically and emotionally from the SARS-CoV-2 virus (SLR2102, SLR2103), suffered from survivor's guilt (SLR2102, SLR2103, SLR2104) and were all simultaneously fulfilling multiple other roles and responsibilities. Each of the participants noted the

negative mental health impact on themselves, their families, and the ripple effects in their organizations.

Each of the participants had an existing strong support system in the business network, family, friends, a Partner Coach, and a professional coach. Each of the participants noted that the caring, deliberate and supportive network provided them with an environment in which they were able to process their experiences and receive assistance and individualized help to heal and grow. Many of the interventions, support systems, business friendship circles and specialized solutions (SLR2102, SLR2103) provided towards assisting the leaders and followers were initiated through the leaders' networks that had been developed and become more closely knit from the start of the pandemic (Personal Communication, SLR2101, SLR2102, SLR2103, SLR2104, September 2021).

Conclusion

The servant leadership constructs described in the Servant Leadership Model are cyclical in theory and practice. As Greenleaf (1998) states, "the servant-leader is servant first" (p. 1), commencing with embracing and advancing each of the constructs of servant leadership, from Agapao love, and allowing each to flow out of one another and being dependent on one another, in a cyclical manner, as demonstrated in the two recent studies that were conducted.

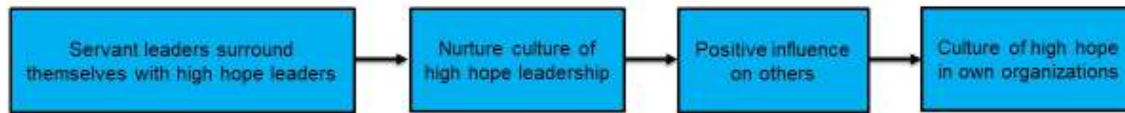
In the unique environment in which the two recent studies were conducted, servant leaders sought to deliberately network together, pray together weekly, collaborate, work together towards innovation, pass work and contacts to one another, make wise recommendations, and start new companies together. Senior entrepreneurs spontaneously sought to mentor less experienced entrepreneurs, endeavored to stimulate, and assist social development projects and demonstrated altruistic qualities in significant endeavors at great personal cost in time and resources through encouraging new entrepreneurs and NPOs. Senior entrepreneurs also sought to assist entrepreneurs in the network who were in financial need, anonymously. In addition, the senior entrepreneurs formed an accountability board to serve other entrepreneurs, actively innovate and stimulate job creation, particularly in previously disadvantaged social communities. These leadership practices are a real-world application of all the constructs within the Servant Leadership Model demonstrated particularly during turbulent times in the marketplace.

The findings of the initial study as well as the second study reinforce the need for leaders to surround themselves with high hope leaders, thereby continuously and deliberately nurturing a culture of high hope in themselves, since hope is a choice. These behaviors will have a positive effect on other leaders and followers alike in their sphere of influence as well as in their own organizations. Consequently, the findings of

the first and second studies have led to the development of the High Hope Leadership Model, represented in the figure below:

Figure 2:

High hope Leadership Model



(Cerff, 2021)

Nurturing hope in leaders and followers is a field that offers opportunities for further research, as does the construct of high hope leadership, its value to leaders and followers and its potential contribution to the resilience of leaders and organizations globally, particularly during turbulent times.

About the Author

Karen Cerff holds a PhD in Organizational Leadership and post-doctoral studies in Executive Coaching & Consulting (Regent University, USA), MEd. Leadership (Cum Laude) (University of Stellenbosch, South Africa), Master Coach Trainer, and Leadership and Life Coach training (LifeForming Leadership Coaching International). Karen is co-vocational as CEO of Transformational Leadership Institute integrating coaching, consulting and training in her interaction globally with organizational leaders and community development leaders, while serving in an academic capacity and as a Board member. Karen's work in the marketplace includes facilitation as a leader of executive think tank groups and other strategic forums.

Karen's research interests include transformational and servant leadership, organizational and leadership development, organizational communication, hope theory and cross-cultural dimensions. She is a chapter author of *Leading an African Renaissance: Opportunities and challenges*, and *Advancements in organizational data collection and measurements: Strategies for addressing attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors*.

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