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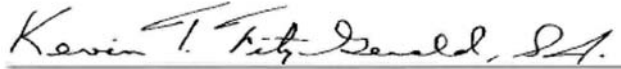
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THE INFLUENCE OF USAF INTELLIGENCE SQUADRON COMMANDER
SERVANT LEADERS ON FOLLOWERS

By
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A DISSERTATION IN PRACTICE

Submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of Creighton University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in
Interdisciplinary Leadership

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Abstract

This qualitative phenomenological research study examined the influences of servant leadership characteristics exhibited by USAF intelligence squadron commanders on USAF intelligence E-8 Senior Master Sergeants (SMSgts). The results of the study highlighted the positive influences of servant leadership to include creating a culture where followers feel like a community, creating strong trust between leaders and followers, and increased team cohesion. The aim of the study was to provide scholarly research for use in professional military education (PME) programs, and by senior leaders who direct professional development discussions related to servant leadership at the squadron level.

Keywords: servant leadership, people first, care, trust, commander, community, development

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family who motivated me to continue my education and inspired me to represent the characteristics of servant leadership discussed throughout this research, as well as my colleagues who I have tried to be my best self in leading, following, and working alongside. Notably, I would like to recognize my two grandfathers, Leo O'Brien Jr. and Frank J. Kelley III, for their leadership, life-time accomplishments, and honorable service in the U.S. Navy.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The most recent Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) General (Gen.) Dave Goldfein, the United States Air Force's (USAF) top military leader, regularly preached the need for servant leaders aiming to shape the future of air, space, and cyberspace superiority. He stated that leadership was a sacred duty as we send Airmen into harm's way, requiring commanders to properly train, equip, and lead followers in order to effectively operate while under fire in a combat environment (Goldfein, 2019a). As servant leaders, it is a duty that USAF personnel must get right. Goldfein (2019b) asked current and future officers to join him on a *people first* journey in an effort to motivate followers to embrace the USAF, an institution rooted in values that focus on *integrity* and *service*. The problem in officer leadership is that not all prioritize the leader-follower relationship – specifically between squadron commanders and the various tiers of the enlisted core – despite Goldfein (2001) having prescribed guidance to commanders at all levels.

Squadron commanders have a significant influence on the development of followers. The impact of leadership characteristics stays with all members of the squadron throughout their careers. The current study examined the influences of servant leadership characteristics exhibited by USAF intelligence squadron commanders on their followers, namely intelligence senior enlisted leaders (SELs) who identified as having worked for a servant leader intelligence squadron commander during their career. Literature and past research listed a variety of servant leadership characteristics to include integrity, people first, skillful communication, awareness of self and others, compassionate collaboration, empowering followers, foresight and building community,

systems thinking, moral authority and moral courage (Department of the Air Force, n.d.; Keith, 2016; Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018; Sipe & Frick, 2015; Wang et al., 2018b).

Statement of the Problem

Squadron command has been explained as both challenging and rewarding, frustrating and satisfying, aggravating and broadening, while very time-consuming (Land, 1983, p. 67) but also a great privilege (Goldfein, 2001). Northouse (2016) noted that leadership and followership occur from the right *mix* of characteristics, indicating adaptive responses and acceptance between a leader and follower (Hurwitz & Koonce, 2017). While the leadership characteristics of USAF intelligence squadron commanders are important and their own self-awareness can provide useful insights, the perception of followers and explanation of their lived experiences provided additional insights into the influences of identified servant leadership characteristics. The active duty USAF is 81% enlisted and 19% officer (AFPC, 2021), with Lieutenant Colonels (Lt Col) filling the roles of USAF intelligence squadron commanders. Success of command is a leader who preaches and exercises values and characteristics that can be learned and replicated by followers, as they develop future leaders for the greater good of the USAF and the nation. Colonel (Col) Marks (2020) stated the number one job of a leader is to make more leaders, with a focus on providing opportunities for growth and creating positive shared experiences.

One issue that has been seen with officer leadership is a sense of careerism and trying to do what is best for the individual's career, instead of first prioritizing the needs of their people and the success of the organization. Quoting Col John Boyd, Stark (2019) highlighted two traditional career paths for officers with one leading to promotions and

distinction, and the other leading to truly significant accomplishments, but without the same rewards. This dichotomy of career paths has noted the term “ticket-puncher,” motivating senior leaders to make a philosophical change to the USAF promotion system, since the careerist mentality prioritizes control instead of service and loyalty to the institution (Stark, 2019). Careerist senior leaders tend to promote careerist followers because loyalty to the ideals of the organization may not be in the careerist’s best interests, using a transactional approach of incentives and threats which does not allow for meaningful differences of opinion [skilled communication, compassionate collaboration, empowering and developing followers] to do what is best for long-term goals [foresight and building community, systems thinking].

Over the last 20 to 30 years, USAF Generals have been attempting to change this dynamic, one that began with Gen. Fogleman in the late 1990s noting that a quality USAF has leadership commitment and characteristics that inspire trust, teamwork, continuous improvement (Yolitz, 1997, p. 18) and follower development (Goldfein, 2001). As a Col, Goldfein (2001) quoted Senator John McCain in that glory and honor can only be achieved when one serves something greater than him or herself (p. 17), later taking command in 2016 as CSAF pushing for revitalization of squadrons as the unit level executing operations, noting that innovative solutions to complex problems of today require inputs from every Airman (Brissett, 2017), thus leveraging their cognitive knowledge and technical expertise.

The USAF officer promotion system has rewarded individual performers, not necessarily critical thinkers but officers who are good at following directions and are placed in the right jobs at the right times (Bethel et al., 2010). It is inherently easier to

measure individual attributes and metrics noted by supervisors than it is to truly examine leadership characteristics and abilities. Stark (2018) noted that USAF officer promotions revolve around 12 indicators that all focus on individual performance, not leadership potential or adherence to USAF core values. USAF intelligence officers and squadron commanders must understand that a successful career path is almost guaranteed if they lead people well and help members of the team become effective leaders themselves (Maxwell, 2013a, p. 3), for it is leveraging the intellectual capital of followers that can truly make a squadron exceptional. Team success benefits all members and may highlight the commander's ability to build cohesive teams to achieve goals, instead of an individual successful at accomplishing tasks without a vision for the future to setup continuity after a two-year command tour. Additionally, Goldfein (2001) understood that as a squadron commander he needed to represent his people, for they have contributed more than he ever did (p. 17). A squadron commander must have loyalty to the followers he or she is privileged to lead, caring for and prioritizing each member's career development.

Conversely, a lack of values can create leaders who are cynical of goodness and morality due to prioritizing their own career path, potentially causing harm to others or even the organization as the only priority is achieving individual goals (Jacobson, 2015). A lack of trust and respect in the leader-follower relationship can deteriorate team cohesion and morale, which may be one of the most challenging tasks for USAF squadron commanders (Smith, 2003). According to Smith (2003), Col Mark Brown understood this challenge, leveraging his senior noncommissioned officer (SNCO) corps to develop buy-in for his vision to permeate throughout all levels of his organization. Lt Col Smith, updating previous guidance to squadron commanders from Col Timmons and

praised by then CSAF Gen. Jumper, noted morale comes from three sources: “a feeling that they have an important job to do, a feeling that they are trained to do it well, and a feeling that their great work is appreciated and recognized” (Smith, 2003, p. 53). These sources could be potential influences from servant leadership characteristics.

Leaders who exhibit characteristics contrary to that of servant leadership may do so as a result of not trusting others in the organization to act in the best interest of all members (Jacobson, 2015). However, attitude adjustments are possible and such alterations can have a profound effect on altering a person’s or leader’s life (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). USAF intelligence officers are also trained to be experts in the units they serve – the years leading up to squadron command – giving them a false sense of confidence in being successful as an individual without a main focus on others or team success. These narrow experiences may limit their desire to communicate and collaborate, especially with followers who may have more expertise and result in an inability to accept that a correct or possibly better strategy could come from outside their own cognitive model (Bethel et al., 2010).

The characteristics identified for servant leadership are powered by strong self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and an ability to exude empathy (Campbell, 2017; Northouse, 2016). These characteristics can be productive tools for USAF intelligence squadron commanders to utilize in their everyday leadership practice. Success for an individual, a team, and an organization is most readily achieved by clear direction [skilled communication] for a specific destination. This direction is more readily accepted when followers have buy-in and commitment to the organization. The ever-growing number of USAF intelligence squadrons are constantly going through changes with

technology innovation, advanced adversary threats, and personnel movements which include the commanders. This uncertainty can either create stress on organization members or be alleviated through open and honest communication in a way that builds trust and loyalty. The multi-dimensionality of servant leadership makes the various characteristics difficult to disentangle, or study each individually.

Some models prescribe trust as a characteristic of servant leadership (Patterson, 2003; Russell & Stone, 2002) and other research indicates trust as an influence from leaders who care for others, focus on the leader-follower relationship, as well as the follower's growth (Carter & Baghurst, 2014; Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018; Nichols & Cottrell, 2014). As a servant leadership characteristic, stewardship establishes a caretaker mentality motivating followers for loyalty to the leader and teamwork (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Research shows that followers seek out leaders who take care of them and focus on follower growth which, in turn, builds loyalty (Carter & Baghurst, 2014; Nichols & Cottrell, 2014). A rediscovery of servant leadership as a model is now used as an approach to develop the full potential of employees (Liden et al., 2014; Parris & Peachey, 2013; Van Dierendonck, 2011) with the capacity to meet organizational challenges (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018) and increase motivation and productivity (Wang et al., 2018b). These are all priorities for USAF intelligence squadrons with a focus on a culture of cohesion, requiring a foundation of trust both internal with teams and external from senior decision makers (Goldfein, 2020a).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine the lived experiences of USAF intelligence senior enlisted leaders (SELs) – in the ranks of E-8

Senior Master Sergeant (SMSgt) – as followers of USAF intelligence squadron commanders who exhibited servant leadership characteristics. This study specifically looked at servant leadership characteristics as identified in the literature and supported by Jesuit and USAF values-based teachings.

Research Question

The professional development of USAF intelligence personnel is directly influenced by the USAF intelligence officers who lead them. The direction given by USAF intelligence squadron commanders, and received by squadron personnel, can be affected in many ways by how the leader-follower relationship is built. As noted by Van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011), the ideal of service is embedded in the leader-follower relationship and servant leaders are genuinely concerned with followers. Literature on servant leadership shows prioritization for the needs of followers (Patterson, 2003). This introduces a moral component (Graham, 1991) characterized as more ethical (Clegg et al., 2007) than other leadership models. Additionally, servant leadership establishes a base of equality with social responsibility (Reinke, 2004), alternatively noted by Holmes (2019) as *people first, mission always*. This mentality suggests that organizational objectives will be achieved more consistently if leaders first prioritize follower needs. Compassion and forgiveness create an atmosphere of acceptance and trust to bring out the best in people (Ferch, 2005) through increasing the leader-follower bond.

Van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011) developed the Servant Leadership Survey (SLS), a validated and reliable instrument for measuring servant leadership. The SLS focused on the role of the leader in their relationship with followers. With no agreed upon definition of servant leadership characteristics, this study identified servant leadership

characteristics that a sample of USAF intelligence SELs highlighted from their career-long lived experiences in following various squadron commanders. The baseline list of characteristics used in the literature review helped guide discussions, but the goal was to illuminate terminology from the participants. The second part was participants highlighting their perceived influences of commanders who exhibited characteristics they identified as part of servant leadership. The current study was guided by the following research question:

How do USAF intelligence squadron commanders who exhibit servant leadership characteristics influence the lived experiences of USAF intelligence senior enlisted leaders as followers?

Aim of the Dissertation in Practice

The aim of this dissertation in practice (DIP) was to highlight the influence of servant leadership characteristics exhibited by USAF intelligence squadron commanders on followers and provide a framework of recommended servant leadership practices for intelligence officers to use in leadership roles, notably squadron command. An additional aim of this study was to publish research that could be used in professional military education (PME) to develop future military leaders who understand the value of servant leadership, as well as in unofficial leadership sessions held by officer and enlisted leaders within a squadron or other organization. As Spears (2010) identified, servant leadership characteristics may occur naturally for many individuals but can be further enhanced through learning and practice. The focus on the leader-follower relationship in this study could be used in one-on-one communication or 360-degree feedback sessions. USAF members are expected to perform feedback with their followers twice a year (e.g.,

feedback for the supervisor-subordinate relationship in the chain of command). With personnel moving frequently, this is typically done as initial feedback and mid-term feedback to correspond with annual performance reports (enlisted performance report (EPR) and officer performance report (OPR)). The USAF currently uses the Airman Comprehensive Assessment (ACA) worksheet to document the feedback discussion, but much of this is expected to be verbal and a two-way discussion. The ACAs are not kept in official records, but the annual performance reports do stay with the individual throughout their career.

Talent management is a priority for Air Force senior leaders, attempting to increase flexibility and transparency for personnel placement and taking input from commanders (Bailey, 2019). In order for commanders to honestly manage the talent of their followers, they must understand each and every one of them as a person. If talent management is truly a priority, then it is the role of commanders to develop future leaders in a profession of constant change. This research study focused on the influence of servant leaders on the lives of followers, notably the perceptions of SELs with many lived experiences to share with their participation. This provided insight for how to best manage and develop talent in an effort to produce the types of future leaders that the USAF desires across the force, especially in command positions.

Although research publications on servant leadership are numerous, none have specifically focused on USAF intelligence members and the relationship between squadron commanders and enlisted personnel. The current study sought to identify perceptions within the identified population regarding which servant leadership characteristics may be more important to followers and the influence those characteristics

may have on individuals, teams, and squadrons. Enlisted personnel are also leaders at various levels during their career and SELs have had this experience at several levels. The extensive literature review provided a strong framework for the study, while the data collection and analysis provided a new perspective on the subject with a new culture group for potential use in USAF PME. This is expected to have positive impacts on all USAF personnel and relatable to past, current, and future intelligence squadron commanders. Further research could be accomplished to encompass a larger sample size, possibly a quantitative study to amplify this qualitative study, as well as examining other career fields to highlight USAF personnel as a whole and not just intelligence members.

Definition of Relevant Terms

This DIP study focused on the lived experiences of current USAF intelligence SELs regarding their previous servant leader squadron commanders. The identified themes highlighted the influence that servant leader USAF intelligence squadron commanders had on the participants. These lived experiences provided insight as to potential long-term impacts of servant leadership on followers. The following terms were used operationally within this study:

360-degree feedback: Annual performance assessments that incorporate input from subordinates and peers, not just direct supervisors or managers (Lowney, 2005).

Characteristic: Something that distinguishes or identifies a person; a distinguishing trait or quality (Definition, n.d.).

Code: A word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldana & Omasta, 2018, p. 412).

Commander's intent: Description and definition of what the commander views as the end state of a successful mission, but it understands the potential chaos and evolving events for a project or battle. The role of this is to guide and empower subordinates to take initiative, while having the freedom to adapt as needed. (Storlie, 2010).

Culture: The Air Force has a unique cultural identity compared to the other military services, typically defined as more occupational with a heavy focus on technology (Thomas, 2012). The service's mission is used to promote cohesion, and each organization has its own culture with underlying values and beliefs. A unit's culture, or personality, defines who they are and impacts how they accomplish the mission, with dedication to common goals and working together being vital to a positive culture (Barrington, 2012).

Data: Represented by points that are seemingly meaningless until processed (e.g. locations, temperatures, specific times) (Weber, 2018).

Department of Defense (DoD): Includes all military branches of service and the majority of military intelligence personnel in the United States government.

Ethics: Systematic study of the principles of right and wrong behavior (Johnson, 2015).

Favoritism: When a leader gives more opportunities or benefits to one follower over others, which is typically for reasons other than their skills or performance but can sometimes be subconsciously and unintentional (Hageman, 2019).

Field Grade Officer (FGO): Officers in the ranks of Major (Maj), Lieutenant Colonel (Lt Col), and Colonel (Col); however, typically reserved for the first two when discussing rank categories and where officers will hold their first command authority

position (e.g. Majors as Detachment Commanders or Directors of Operations, and Lt Cols as Squadron Commanders).

Follower: Within a USAF intelligence squadron regarding the commander, followers would be all personnel within the squadron. There are also a variety of leader-follower relationships in the squadron due to the chain of command and organizational structure.

Heroism (Jesuit Pillar of Success): A leader who energizes themselves and others through heroic ambition (Lowney, 2005).

Inclusive cultural empathy: The ability to reach beyond what is normally comfortable in a manner that allows leaders or counselors to understand the perspective of others that increases competence in a relationship-centered context (Pedersen et al., 2008). The point of inclusive cultural empathy in this study is it being a tool for leaders to resolve problems and find a balance in the relationship with their followers, relating to *skilled communication* and *putting people first*.

Information: Data points processed together and synthesized by matching attributes (e.g. temperature of a particular location at a specific time) (Weber, 2018).

Ingenuity (Jesuit Pillar of Success): Confidently innovated and adapted to embrace a changing world (Lowney, 2005).

Innovation: Air Force innovation is defined as going “over not through” national strategic challenges in order to contribute to American security, which begins with framing operational problems and identifying strategic solutions that can be executed with a short-cycle development process that allows for rapid adaptation and agility (Grissom et al., 2016).

Intellectual capital: the value associated with individual cognitive knowledge (human capital) and relationships developed in the workplace (e.g. the cost of replacing an employee because of their knowledge, skills, and role on a team) (Definition, n.d.).

Knowledge: Learning applied to information to be useful to a decision maker (Weber, 2018).

Leader: An individual who has others reporting to them within an organization, noted by a chain of command within a USAF intelligence squadron. The leader of focus for this study is the squadron commander, while understanding that there are numerous leaders within a squadron.

Long-term impacts: Impacts of an experience that affect an individual after the experience ends. Long-term impacts in this study will be the influences of servant leadership characteristics, noted by the lived experiences of the participants.

Love (Jesuit Pillar of Success): Engaging others with a positive, loving attitude (Lowney, 2005).

Micro-informed: Followers proactively inform decision-makers of progress, setbacks, and resource constraints which is empowered by a leader who clearly identifies which pieces of data best inform them on various tasks or projects. This practice can potentially increase a follower's autonomy by preemptively providing answers to questions they know the leader will ask. (Acosta, 2019).

Micromanage: A leader being overbearing on projects and tasks for followers; this can negatively impact honesty, loyalty, and communication (Acosta, 2019).

Morals: Specific standards of right and wrong (Johnson, 2015).

NCO: Noncommissioned officer in the ranks of E-5 to E-6 typically function as a first-line supervisor for Airmen in the ranks of E-1 to E-4, and are empowered and trusted to be both a leader and technical expert. NCOs are the link between a commander's guidance and direction to the entire unit in order to execute tasks effectively. NCOs must teach, coach, and mentor subordinates as a steward of the institution. (Brownhill & Pierce, 2013).

Intelligence operations floor: An intelligence work-center with sections on one open space which all functions of intelligence operations are managed for collection, processing, exploitation, analysis, and reporting (Menthe et al., 2021).

Organizational impacts: Effects experienced by an organization due to the actions or behavior of personnel within the organization. Noted as changes to culture, structure, knowledge, or nature of work (Bianca, 2016).

Pedagogy: The way in which teachers accompany learners in their growth and development; used with Ignatian values to promote the teaching-learning process. Pedagogy focuses on teaching methods; examining teaching styles, feedback, and assessment. (Cole, 2019).

Personal impacts: Effects of an experience on an individual as a result of other people's behavior or action. A leader who influences followers and can initiate change; showing credibility, trustworthiness, managing adversity, develop self-awareness, and lead with core values (CMOE, 2021).

Professional military education (PME): a standard requirement for USAF members upon moving into a new rank category (e.g. moving from Airman to NCO or from Company Grade Officer to Field Grade Officer), which hosts common curriculum

to teach expectations of doing the right thing for the right reasons (Brownhill & Pierce, 2013).

Resilience: Defined by psychologists as the process of adapting well when faced with adversity, trauma, or significant stress (Palmiter et al., 2012).

Self-Awareness (Jesuit Pillar of Success): Understanding of one's own strengths, weaknesses, values, and worldview (Lowney, 2005).

Senior Leaders: Officers in the ranks of Col and Gen., either in a command position or on a headquarters staff to provide direction and guidance to subordinate commanders for execution. Senior leaders in the military are developed from within; not hired from outside the organization (Brownhill & Pierce, 2013).

Senior NCO: Senior noncommissioned officer (SNCO) in the ranks of E-7 to E-9, typically function as a Flight Chief, Operations Superintendent, or Squadron Superintendent – working for a Capt, Maj, or Lt Col, respectively. SNCOs are afforded more leeway than NCOs, expected to advise the officer leaders and enhance their ability to command effectively, serving as a force multiplier for the unit (Brownhill & Pierce, 2013).

Servant leadership: A phrase coined in 1970 describing the servant as a leader (Greenleaf, 1970), a practice dating back throughout history focusing on the needs of others, especially team members (Emerald Works, 2018). Servant leaders give followers the support they need to meet work and personal goals (Greenleaf, 1998). The servant leadership characteristics for this research were defined in the literature review and amplified with data collected from participant interviews.

Squadron Commander: Command in the military is unique, noted to have no civilian equivalent for the level of trust, authority, and responsibility (Smith, 2003, p. vii). The role of squadron commander requires leading by example and is selected from individuals with the highest levels of integrity, selflessness, and excellence (Smith, 2003). USAF intelligence squadron commanders are in the rank of Lt Col, typically leading 150 to 600 people depending on the mission. The eight participants in this study represented squadrons ranging from 97 to 425, with an average size of 215 personnel.

Squadron Superintendent: Typically, the rank of Chief Master Sergeant (CMSgt) as the highest enlisted rank filling roles of superintendents, most with average active duty time of 22.6 years but Senior Master Sergeants (SMSgts) may sometimes perform squadron superintendent roles (Powers, 2020).

Theme: An extended phrase or sentence that identifies and functions as a way to categorize a set of data into a topic that emerges from a pattern of ideas (Saldana & Omasta, 2018, p. 420).

USAF: United States Air Force includes Active Duty (AD), Air National Guard (ANG), and Air Reserve Component (ARC); this study focused on AD only which is a total of 326,855 personnel with 81% enlisted force, 265,121 personnel, and 19% officers, 61,734 personnel, as of 30 June 2021. The average age of the officer force is 35 and for enlisted it is 28 with 78.7% men and 21.3% women across all members (AFPC, 2021).

Vision: Guides the organization to achieve goals and can be more specified on projects with commander's intent. A vision should be understandable, inclusive, supportive and encourage participation. (Goldfein, 2001).

Common language was used as much as possible or explicitly described if a military term. Intelligence personnel serve common types of roles across the DoD, as well as within government agencies.

Methodology Overview

A qualitative methodology with a phenomenological research design was chosen with the desire to explore the influence of servant leadership characteristics exhibited by USAF intelligence squadron commanders on followers, which this study examined the lived experiences of USAF intelligence SELs. These are explained in depth and analyzed through coding, instead of recording data points through a quantitative methodology. Phenomenological studies focus on a common concept as the human experience and the subjective perception of participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018), which in this case was servant leadership characteristics. Analysis highlighted commonalities between participants: culture, beliefs, and behaviors of a group. The culture within USAF intelligence squadrons was the focus regarding themes that emerged from the data analysis.

Methodology

Given the desire to explore the lived experiences of participants with a shared culture, a qualitative methodology was chosen. This approach was best to understand several individuals' common experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018) relating to USAF intelligence squadron commanders with servant leadership characteristics. A qualitative approach can be used to examine the relationship between managerial cognition and actions with organizational performance (Kumbure et al., 2020). A qualitative approach allows exploration of cognitive differences between participants, understanding human

nature and highlighting opportunities from the research to enhance organizational performance. This study focused on the perception from human subjects to identify characteristics of leaders that influenced them and the organizations they have worked in.

As noted by Beck (2014), many publications on servant leadership are mostly anecdotal and conceptual, not the result of empirical studies. The research that has been conducted mainly focused on understanding how managers applied servant leadership, with less focus on the acceptance from and influence on followers. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) believed that quantitative data alone was inadequate to address the domain of leadership, stating that the complexities of leadership require qualitative data to explain the results or to explain initial quantitative data if a mixed methods approach is used. The voice of the participants can provide a more complete picture for the data analysis, while coding responses to be analyzed for themes. The qualitative approach was done with a purpose to understand better the characteristics and behaviors associated with individuals perceived as servant leaders, using in-depth one-on-one interviews with open-ended questions and allowing the participants to review the transcripts to clarify or expand responses as needed (Richards & Morse, 2007).

Qualitative phenomenological research can be used to explore and describe the experiences of participants (Sheppard et al., 2020), focusing on a specific topic of interest. This approach was appropriate and provided important data to better understand that perceptions of followers on the characteristics of servant leadership and the influence they had on individuals, teams, and organizations. Past research suggests that emotions play a central role in the leadership process, indicating the importance of follower perceptions and a leader's ability to manage these emotions in one's self and others

(George, 2000). The primary data collection tool for this research study was interviews to gain valuable insight into the lived experiences of the participants.

Due to geographic constraints and travel restrictions, the interviews were conducted through Zoom, a top choice for video conferencing and recording with ease of scheduling and password protecting the connection (Brooks, 2020). Zoom has also become a familiar choice for USAF personnel in 2020-2021. Zoom offers a free option for one-on-one connections and recording. Using Creighton University's Zoom-Pro permissions allowed the ability to have the recording create a transcript, by enabling closed captioning and exporting as a text file when saving the recording, which was then reviewed and edited after the interview. The initial population was sent a recruiting email and asked to respond through personal email and conduct all aspects of this study during off-duty hours, as directed by Air Force guidance and approval from the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force. Volunteers within this population of 240 E-8 SELs were screened with an initial questionnaire to determine if they met criteria of the study and the Servant Leadership Survey (SLS) was used to identify top candidates for the sample. Recruitment was done directly to the members of this population by obtaining a list of USAF intelligence SELs in the rank of E-8. The initial recruitment email included an initial description of the study with the purpose, aim, methodology, and expected time commitment. The questionnaire is shown in Appendix D, and Appendix E shows the SLS used by Van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011); however, the researcher added in the term commander in place of manager and that is what was provided to participants. The SLS in Appendix G is broken out by category for the researcher's benefit to see how each question relates to a given servant leadership characteristic.

Delimitations, Limitations, and Personal Biases

Delimitations

Delimitation factors are characteristics that prevent a researcher from claiming findings that are true for all people in all times and places, limiting the scope and defining the boundaries with regard to the actual participants (Simon, 2011). This researcher understands the significant delimitation with this study given its small number of participants with only eight volunteers, from the 240-member population. Participants specifically focused on their lived experiences and their perception of the events related to this research topic. The aim was to highlight the culture and experiences of individuals now working in similar positions across various USAF intelligence organizations. The findings will not be true for all USAF intelligence personnel as different people respond best to different leadership characteristics. The goal of the study was to provide documented research for USAF officers and enlisted leaders as they sharpen their leadership skills, but there will be situations that require a different perspective and leadership characteristics that will not be discussed in this study.

Limitations

Limitations are built-in restrictions due to the methodology chosen and are inherent with qualitative studies (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). The main limitation of this study was accessibility to participants. This study was contingent on volunteers and time during off duty hours. This study did not name specific squadrons and participants all worked in different organizations. However, all participants had worked within an intelligence squadron during their career and their responses were specific to USAF intelligence squadron commanders. The lived experiences studied were all past

experiences and not related to the participants' current squadron commander or senior leader. This may have been a limitation as to discussing information that is not current, but it ensured no fear of answering questions honestly from the participants. Additionally, there was no proof of measure regarding the squadron commanders being discussed of having servant leadership characteristics as the results highlight the perceptions shared by the participants about said commanders.

Another limitation was the qualitative nature of this study and relying on interview responses from the participants, instead of a larger sample size answering quantitative responses that would be easier to measure objectively. The timeline of this study was a limitation due to IRB delays with new Department of Defense guidance conflicting with Department of Air Force direction, but approval was ultimately secured through the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force. Sampling was based on questionnaire responses.

Personal Biases

The researcher had a personal bias on this topic as a leader who aims to practice servant leadership that is founded in Jesuit and USAF priorities of self-reflection, emotional intelligence, and empathy. This noted bias provided an increased level of knowledge on the subject to benefit the literature review and examination of previous scholarly research, but it required remaining actively aware of the bias during data collection and analysis. Questions during data collection were direct and without excessive discussion, agreement, or disagreement from the researcher. Data analysis was aimed to accurately reflect the participant responses without any attempt to make the data fit the researchers preconceived expectations. The researcher completed three PME

courses focused on leadership and joint military operations, a driving factor for publishing research that can benefit these programs. The participants may have also had a bias on this subject since they all volunteered to participate, showing a desire to be a part of increasing knowledge on servant leadership.

The majority of the researcher's writing in the Interdisciplinary Leadership Doctorate (ILD) program had been focused on servant leadership with an aim to follow the guidance of USAF senior leaders like Gen. Goldfein. Professional experiences of the researcher have shown teams excel from the servant leadership characteristics identified in this study, as well as use in mentoring other USAF officers. The researcher only had access to information that any other researcher would be able to obtain. The data collection, analysis, and results were documented to accurately reflect the responses of the participants. It was important for the researcher to ask questions that were general and direct, none that led the participants to respond in a certain way or influenced by researcher bias. Discussion and stories from the participants helped provide details, but follow-up questions from the researcher were consistent for all participants.

Reflections of the Scholar-Practitioner

Throughout my life, I have learned leadership lessons through academic teachings, social interactions, experience in organizations with hierarchical structures, and athletic team competition. I have developed a foundation of service across all aspects of my life, understanding that in all forums I serve something greater than myself. Growing up in Chicago, I had the pleasure to watch Michael Jordan (MJ) play in the 1990s. MJ's individual greatness was truly exceptional, but it was not until he focused on the development of his teammates to make them better and identifying each individual's

talents that as a team they were better than simply several great individual players. The Bulls became the greatest team in the NBA, not just the team with the best player but able to win a championship and ultimately win six in seven years. Despite MJ not being a servant leader, he understood the need to develop others for the good of the organization and not simply focus on his individual greatness. USAF leaders mention that Airmen sharpen Airmen as steel sharpens steel (1st SOW Commander, 2018), and that is what MJ did with his teammates in order for all of them to become great and achieve something bigger than could have been accomplished individually.

My USAF career has been shaped by taking advantage of opportunities to grow, as regularly presented by my leaders and mentors. This practice gave me an interest in servant leadership to then focus on the growth of others alongside me, with an understanding that a military leader does not need to choose between whether to put their people or the mission first. The Air Combat Command (ACC) motto, *people first – mission always*, notes that if leaders put their people first then they will work hard to always get the mission done (Holmes, 2019). As an intelligence analyst, I focused heavily on the servant leadership characteristics of compassionate collaboration and foresight to look past the current day of tasks in order to satisfy greater organizational priorities aligned to a vision of developing Airmen and maintain superiority. As an intelligence leader, I see the need to empower followers and have a systems thinker mindset for conceptualizing the big picture. The values-based leadership prescribed by the Jesuits motivated me to better understand the USAF leadership teachings that align with this practice. Colin Powell regularly described that leadership is all about people (Harari, 2002), similar to the Jesuit Charism of *Cura personalis* – for taking care of your people is

about harnessing their power to achieve a meaningful goal. Military leaders must be supportive and mentor followers to ensure strength in times of uncertainty and adversity (Willink & Babin, 2018), which are constant for most intelligence professionals.

This study aimed to combine knowledge gained during previous courses in the interdisciplinary leadership program – Leadership Styles and Reflective Practice, Strategic Planning and Management, Organizational Theory and Behavior, Change Theory and Practice, Introduction to Servant Leadership, and Followership. The role of leadership is extremely important to organizations constantly experiencing change, requiring a strategic mindset for reflection on past successes and failures to refine the desired future mission and vision that is coherently communicated to followers. Aspects of these previous classes all have supporting roles to the main focus in this study, servant leadership. As a USAF intelligence officer, I filled an O-4 leadership position as a notable milestone assignment (MA) and a general precursor to squadron command as a Lt Col (O-5) in four to six years. In preparing for this research study, I focused on mitigating my own preconceptions and assumptions in order to let the data collected from the participants speak for itself.

I believe the topic of servant leadership is important to the USAF and this research study provided a scholarly publication on the influences of USAF servant leader intelligence squadron commanders. The shared perspectives of USAF intelligence SELs provided insight of lived experiences from the entirety of their careers. Some publications on leadership focused on the perspective of the leader or the ideas of the writer, and this study highlighted the follower mindset. True leadership is more than simply managing a group of followers to achieve objectives focused on organizational goals. A leader must

focus on the human experience that cultivates an *in-group* to provide an identity and culture for the organization. This publication could be used in USAF leadership courses or in mentorship between leaders and followers, focused on developing teams and growing future leaders.

Summary

Research indicated that servant leadership characteristics benefit the leader-follower relationship and can facilitate success in achieving organizational priorities. Senior USAF and government leaders, notably Colin Powell and Gen. Goldfein, proclaimed the importance of a servant leader mindset and identified how these characteristics can grow future leaders and build exceptional teams. Servant leaders provided followers with the tools to succeed and supported them to meet work and personal goals. This dissertation identified nine servant leadership characteristics pertinent to leadership in the USAF. Spears (2010) identified 10 servant leadership characteristics: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. Additionally, Sipe and Frick (2015) listed seven characteristics of servant leadership: person of character, puts people first, skilled communicator, compassionate collaborator, foresight, systems thinker, and moral authority. The nine characteristics discussed with participants in this study were: integrity, people first, skilled communication, awareness of self and others, compassionate collaboration, empowering followers, foresight and building community, systems thinking, and moral authority and moral courage. The data analysis yielded six servant leadership themes which tied back to the characteristics

identified in the literature review, and six themes on the influences of a servant leader USAF intelligence squadron commander.

True leadership is more than simply managing a group of followers to achieve objectives focused on organizational goals, it is about building meaningful relationships and creating a positive influence on others and one's self. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study was to examine the influences of USAF intelligence squadron commander servant leadership characteristics on followers, as explained through the lived experiences of participating intelligence SELs. The leader-follower relationship that a squadron commander has with all of their subordinates is an important part of the culture within the unit. The results of this study provide a framework of recommended practices for future leaders to use when in command positions, and could potentially become part of PME prescribed reading material and teachings.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

As noted by Chiefs of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) since the birth of the USAF, leadership at the top of every organization is critical to performance. Over the past 20-30 years, servant leadership has become a foundation directed by USAF senior leaders. Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) students regularly examine USAF leaders of past and present. For example, Sloan (2009) examined former CSAF Gen. Schwartz's vision for every member to have wisdom, insight, innovation, and leadership. Sloan identified the practice of servant leadership to meet this challenge, while highlighting that the nation has trained an enormous population of managers, but failed to educate authentic leaders.

Current USAF leaders must take a more proactive approach to mentor the next generation of leaders, not simply believing that leaders and commanders can learn on the fly (Sloan, 2009). Fogleman (2001) noted that maximum performance of a unit can rely on a single individual in a position of leadership – organizational hierarchy from squadron commander, flight commander, section commander – as leaders in key positions influence the current and future success of followers. Fogleman understood that servant leadership could be a powerful tool for implementing successful change quickly, with a deep belief in the unlimited potential of every individual in an organization (1994). It is the role of a USAF leader to invite such a valuable resource into their organizations, as well as develop it as part of their culture and encourage followers to practice the same characteristics as they grow into leaders. Fogleman's direction contrasted with those who see themselves as a leader first, with motivation to lead due to a need for power and prestige, contrary to servant leadership characteristics.

This dissertation focused specifically on servant leadership characteristics as previously identified by various authors (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018; Liden et al., 2014; Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). The characteristics identified may be intertwined in other leadership philosophies, but the terms as used in this study were constrained to a discussion of servant leadership characteristics. Nine servant leadership characteristics were included in the literature review:

- *integrity*: accountability, character, behaving ethically
- *people first*: service before self, stewardship, humility
- *skillful communication*: empathy, listening, welcomes feedback
- *awareness of self and others*: including authenticity
- *compassionate collaboration*: including persuasion
- *empowering followers*: developing careers and future leaders
- *foresight and building community*: leadership versus management
- *systems thinking*: conceptualization and teaching/coaching followers
- *moral authority and moral courage*: command authority

The examination of each servant leadership characteristic was tied to the values-based leadership approach described by Jesuit teachings and the core values of the USAF (Department of the Air Force, n.d.). The three Ignatian values most relevant to this study were: *Cura personalis*, care for the individual person stressing the importance of one-on-one relationships (Gallo, 2016); *men and women for and with others* described as unselfish behavior and service to others (Jesuits, n.d.); and *contemplation in action* for reflective practice (Creighton University Department of Education, n.d.). Before a leader can take care of followers, they must first take care of themselves. Jesuit leadership

teachings are a foundation for successful implementation of servant leadership with self-awareness, ingenuity [foresight], love [people first, skilled communication, compassionate collaboration], and heroism [moral authority and courage] having been noted by Lowney (2005). Keith (2016) noted that servant leaders can lift morale through positive spirit, provide the glue that holds a group together, prioritize power for and with people (instead of power over), build trust, and affirmatively build a better organization. With no agreed upon definition of servant leadership characteristics, this research study used the literature review and identified servant leadership characteristics that USAF intelligence senior enlisted leaders (SELs) in the rank of E-8 Senior Master Sergeant (SMSgt) highlighted from their career-long lived experiences in following various USAF intelligence squadron commanders. The study was guided by the following research question: How do USAF intelligence squadron commanders who exhibit servant leadership characteristics influence the lived experiences of USAF intelligence senior enlisted leaders as followers?

Servant Leadership Characteristics

Research from various authors spanned a multitude of servant leadership characteristics. The USAF aims to develop exceptional leaders with servant leadership characteristics of self-awareness, communication, being other-centered, kindness, and unselfishness noted for enabling leaders to go from good to great (Campbell, 2017). Additionally, servant leadership is not about a leader getting everyone to like them (Harari, 2002), but more about knowing followers and treating them as humans while using effective communication to ensure credibility and effective organizational performance. As AT&T's Director of Management Research, Greenleaf learned that the

most effective leaders across one of the world's largest corporations were focused on serving others (Keith, 2016).

Integrity, Ethical Behavior, & Accountability

Integrity First is the first core value identified for the Department of the Air Force (n.d.). USAF leaders, especially squadron commanders, are expected to exhibit integrity in order to set the example for their followers. Leading with integrity can build trust in professional relationships, enabling power through utilizing available information to influence others by creating buy-in for proposed courses of action or outcomes (Eisen, 2018). This framework of integrity and trust allows leaders and followers to solve problems together. Negative experiences aside, USAF Airmen inherently trust the processes in an organization because of the institutional core values and legal expectations of those in leadership positions. The systems in place bolster trust in the military culture because of processes like the Inspector General for complaints, equal opportunity policies, Air Force Instructions (AFIs), and other documented directives or guidelines (Eisen, 2018). With the foundation of institutional trust, a squadron commander must then build relationship trust with followers that is firmly rooted in a foundation of integrity, ethical behavior, and accountability.

Integrity & Ethical Behavior

Literature defined integrity as a servant leadership characteristic with some authors citing ethical considerations to ensure appropriate behavior in organizations (Brown et al., 2005), and others prioritized integrity and trustworthiness to serve the good of the whole (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). This is in line with the USAF priority of *integrity first* and values-based leadership. Jesuit teachings noted that a leader who

aims to serve more than lead will have a strong sense of personal integrity (Lowney, 2005). A leader's actions and words are consistently scrutinized by their followers which requires ethical behavior to be done with open, fair, and honest communication (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018; Liden et al., 2014). Much of the literature intertwined the various servant leadership characteristics.

Quick and Goolsby (2013) cited a variety of authors on followership and leadership, some reported that senior-level executives rank honesty/integrity as the first priority characteristic in the leader-follower relationship. Integrity as a characteristic promoted honesty and authenticity, calling leaders and followers to speak the truth because "a culture of organizational integrity often is reflected by leadership from the top and is anchored in the common good, not in the individual self-interest" (2013, p. 3). This aspect speaks to the fact integrity supported servant leadership, putting self-serving behavior and immediate gratification aside due to the potential negative impacts on others. Ethical behavior is supported by a foundation of integrity first (2013).

Additionally, personal accountability managed the observable actions and behaviors of leaders and followers, with an acceptance of corrective feedback and coaching since even good intentions may not be executed as desired (2013). Ultimately, research showed that accountability allowed an organization to build a culture of integrity.

Accountability

A military leader-follower relationship is reinforced by integrity, and discipline ensured NCOs will make sure that the end-state will be reached no matter the challenges (Brownhill & Pierce, 2013). Integrity also focused on accountability as a mechanism for responsibility of outcomes with individuals and teams (Konczak et al., 2000). The term

accountability has been emphasized as relevant to servant leadership, but neglected in scholarly publications with integrity and ethical behavior having received priority (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Lt Col Gross commanded the 10th Intelligence Squadron and his leadership philosophy focused on integrity to guide interactions in order to build mutual trust and respect, while holding himself and others accountable for actions and decisions (Smith, 2003). In the military and business of intelligence, all members of an organization must be able to count on each other and trust what is said. Lt Col Gross also put people first as number one on his philosophy list. The USAF core values list *integrity first* if exhibited in the true spirit of the service with the realization that *service before self* is typically done with ethical behavior.

Servant leadership places accountability on the follower to be an active participant and partner to identify and solve problems, while also being involved with the decision-making and being expected to identify opportunities for change (Carsten et al., 2017) and innovation. Followership can be examined with servant leadership regarding open communication and feedback that allows for constructively challenging a leader when necessary (Carsten et al., 2017). Without this proactive communication and expectation of accountability for both members of a leader-follower relationship, then there could be a lack of responsibility of followers to provide inputs and result in a more passive and reactionary attitude in an organization. The practical aspects of servant-leadership in practice rely on a trusting relationship between a leader and followers, reinforcing the importance for integrity and accountability, as well as a value-driven spirituality and stewardship within the organization (Spears, 1998).

People First: Stewardship & Humility*People First*

Servant leadership is at its core a supportive, people-centered leadership style that shows consideration, support, and concern for followers and their welfare (Panaccio et al., 2015, p. 662). Lt Col Gross stated, “People are our number one asset and deserve the best we can give them” (Smith, 2003, p. 30), a comment of many servant leaders (Sipe & Frick, 2015) understanding that this characteristic can motivate followers to overcome challenges. In being a leader who exhibits service before self, USAF members aim to develop followers into the best Airmen, team members, and future leaders possible. Literature noted that putting people first focused on followers’ career progression and leadership development (Liden et al., 2014), which are vital to the success and continuity of an organization.

Trust is a vital part of a USAF squadron commander’s relationship with SNCOs and NCOs, who must regularly take ownership of a commander’s orders and delegate tasks to the rest of the organization. A leader who puts people first can trust that followers in the chain of command will execute directives to the best of their abilities. Brownhill and Pierce (2013) state, “A positive and professional relationship between the two leaders, [the commander and SNCO/NCO], creates and sustains healthy and productive organizational/command climate” (p. 39), which “yields the trust, pride, commitment, and unity that enable positive action and the ability to deal with uncertainty and change” (p. 34). This people first mentality related to authenticity, empowerment, humility, and stewardship (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).

Stewardship

USAF officers are directed to rely on the expertise of SELs (Smith, 2003) in order to maximize productivity of the team. NCOs are expected to support the commander, Brownhill and Pierce (2013) stated that NCOs should take the opportunity to show commanders their abilities in order for them to determine how each NCO can best support and enforce unit goals. A USAF commander who puts people first will more readily obtain the support necessary from the NCO and SNCO core of the squadron. A relationship that is nurtured and built on trust is essential to unit effectiveness, as care for others creates a foundation for growth. Additionally, NCOs are expected to be competent, credible, and capable as they tend to have a greater wealth of knowledge when it comes to the unit culture, mission, areas of success, and areas for improvement (Brownhill & Pierce, 2013).

The leader-follower relationship is critical to successful execution of servant leadership. A bottom-up follower can be developed through stewardship and other servant leadership characteristics, motivating followers to speak up and influence others, supporting coworkers and focusing on collective efforts. Stewardship promoted a culture focused on what is best for the organization and all members, respectfully questioning a leader's decisions when necessary to provide alternative perspectives and tell the leader what they *need* to hear (Maxwell, 2013b). Servant leadership characteristics allow followers to add value to the team by accepting their proactive support, relying on trust and respect between all members. Stewardship started with the leader-follower partnership, which created a coproduction orientation that enhanced the effectiveness of a team (Carsten et al., 2017).

Stewardship is taking responsibility for the actions and performance of a team, where servant leaders hold themselves accountable for the role each team member plays in the organization, which is only successfully implemented with a commitment first to serving the needs of others (Tran & Spears, 2020). Block defined stewardship as holding something in trust for another and the greater good of society, noting leaders with a commitment to serving the needs of others and emphasis on open communication and persuasion, rather than control (2013). Stewardship means leading by example through values and behaviors, as well as taking responsibility for the organization through service (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Stewardship also breeds social responsibility, loyalty, and team work (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011), fostering an obligation to a common good beyond one's own self-interest (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Beck (2014) identified stewardship as a leader being responsible for common interests and to be a caretaker, but even more so a role model.

Stewardship can prepare an organization to leave a positive legacy, with servant leaders playing a moral role necessary for society in giving back to make things better than the way they were found (Beck, 2014). Servant leaders must be willing to be accountable for the well-being of the entire organization, instead of trying to control it and all those within. In practicing stewardship, USAF intelligence leaders may focus on recognizing and rewarding exceptional analysis and service to priority customers. Stewardship shows that the leader will take responsibility for mistakes and give praise for successes, while understanding it is their responsibility to provide a clear understanding of objectives to followers and a timeline for accomplishment.

Humility

Literature indicated that humility relies on self-awareness and acknowledgement of individual limitations to proactively seek contributions from others (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011), while recognizing that no one is infallible or free from making mistakes (Morris et al., 2005). Servant leaders exhibit humility and are more flexible in adapting to a changing environment (Goldfein, 2001), and research has shown that a service attitude for empowerment is most successfully implemented when leaders are humble (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Gen. McChrystal notably reflected in his memoirs that the successes he credited to a decision made were less impressive upon recognizing the myriad of factors and others who had far more to do with the result than he did as the leader (Haigh, 2018), highlighting the need to stay humble as a leader due to the hard work done by followers in order to achieve success.

Goldfein encouraged followers to provide inputs to tough problems, showing humility in that leaders do not always have all the answers. He also regularly stated that officers should be humble servant leaders, an expectation that America has on military leaders in order to lead well and hand off the institution to the next generation better than it was found (Academy Public Affairs, 2019). Stark (2018) noted that *excellence in all we do* is more focused on commitment to values, underpinned by genuine humility. If leaders, and the organizations they lead, hope to achieve excellence then humility is definitely important as individuals recognize that each member can always strive to do better. Stark (2018) stated that leaders need to be better read, better listeners, better teammates, better human beings, and better in anything that helps the Airmen reach their

full potential. These comments show how humility supports developing followers into future leaders.

The attitude and approachability of a USAF commander plays a significant role in the leader-follower relationships which they build within an organization. Followers take notice and respond accordingly to a leader's actions; positively to humility and strength, without bragging or self-promotion. Selflessness and humble performance show that a leader is committed to getting the mission done – not with a focus on personal recognition – which can build trust and confidence in a leader-follower relationship (Brownhill & Pierce, 2013). Professionals aim to identify an effective leadership style that can influence employees to be creative and perform well at work (Ye et al., 2020). Recent literature identified humble leadership to be key in generating positive behavioral outcomes with employees. Professional environments inherently have a competitive climate but the relationship between individuals and coworkers have an impact on performance. A leader who exhibited humility influenced a team to also show humility, which is shown to be increased in more competitive environments (Ye et al., 2020). Humble leaders improved employee engagement and encouraged followers to share their ideas and opinions (Li et al., 2019), as well as improved task performance (Wang et al., 2018a), team creativity (Hu et al., 2017), and team effectiveness (Owens & Hekman, 2016).

Service Before Self Culture

In putting people first, such leaders developed followers into servant leaders who also put people first (Wang et al., 2018b), which can be promoted by verbiage of “you not me” or simply asking “how can I help” to establish trust and mutual respect in an

authentic relationship that drives loyalty and growth of employees for a positive organization culture (You Not Me, n.d.). Leaders who *put people first* and promoted *service before self* also tended to show empathy in caring for followers, which increased their bonding, honesty, and connection (Campbell, 2017). Theodore Roosevelt stated that followers and colleagues tend to only care how much you know when they know how much you care (Hyacinth, 2019), which is an important concept in understanding the influence that servant leadership characteristics can have on followers.

A lapse in ethical behavior is a lack in prioritizing *service before self*, because such public embarrassing behaviors or scandals can lead to a lack of trust in the military from civilians (Tatum et al., 2019). Service before self prioritizes the safety and well-being of others, unit morale, and mission effectiveness. In business, research of CEOs has shown that servant leadership combats negative or selfish executive behaviors and can benefit organizations, highlighting a positive relationship between founder status and servant leadership (Peterson et al., 2012). In the Air Force, commanders must look at producing value for their organization. Lt Col Waldman identified the need for trusting, revenue-producing relationships that rely on the *service before self* (Hoske, 2012). As wingmen, everyone must feel comfortable asking for help and knowing that others will take the time to assist in an effort to better all members equally, instead of trying to outperform each other. Hoske stated, “Angels with one wing can fly only by embracing each other. Be a wing giver, and never fail” (2012, p. 17). Care for others can build a culture of empathy within organizations, which relates to skilled communication as a servant leadership characteristic.

Another aspect of service before self is the service-oriented culture required for intelligence professionals. Research on CEO servant leadership shows a positive influence on organization performance and a service-oriented climate (Huang et al., 2016). This focus on *service* ties into foresight, attempting to create predictive analysis on what will be important to customers and anticipating adversary actions (Petersen, 2011). Servant leaders directly influence frontline employee's and their service performance, quality, and citizenship behavior (Chen et al., 2015). A customer service oriented mindset is a part of servant leadership throughout the entirety of an organization.

Skilled Communicator: Listening & Empathy

Organizations with a people-first culture prioritized listening to stakeholders and serving others, which made them better able to overcome challenges and embrace change with positive courses of action (Kanter, 2020). Skilled communication is two-way, requiring leaders to be active listeners as much as they provide direction and guidance to followers. Clear communication is vital to the leader-follower relationship and it plays a critical role in intelligence dissemination for decision-making. Active listening should be a skill that all intelligence officers possess and refine in their career. Additionally, intelligence analysis requires an ability to understand information and remain agile to present an assessment that is clear, concise, and understandable for decision-makers (Petersen, 2011). USAF commanders can use clear and concise expression for followers to understand their intent for directives given, and through other servant leadership characteristics they can trust followers to execute effectively to reach the desired end-state.

Listening

Tran and Spears (2020) noted that leaders can serve people better with a deep commitment to listening intently and understanding them, which can also translate into better intelligence analysis (Petersen, 2011). Servant leaders listen to followers, learning from their needs and aspirations with a willingness to share in their pain and frustration (Yukl, 2006). To best serve followers, a leader must first understand them while being nurturing when necessary (Beck, 2014). Additionally, the ability to listen, understand, and experience the feelings of others has been described as a key characteristic of servant leadership (Van Dierendonck, 2011). Most leadership characteristics can be learned and developed over time, which is an important aspect of this research. A potential influence of servant leaders is developing followers into future servant leaders.

Active listening ensured open and honest communication, giving followers “the courage to challenge” (Chaleff, 2009, p. 75). This is vital to organizations going through change or constantly looking at ways to innovate in order to stay in front of advancing technology. Leaders are traditionally valued for their communication and decision-making skills, reinforced through servant leaders who have a deep commitment to listen intently (Tran & Spears, 2020). Servant leaders identify the will of a group and prioritize understanding each individual. Listening and self-reflection are important to the growth of servant leaders, with active listening helping to develop strong long-term relationships (Northouse, 2016). Goldfein directed all officers to have awareness for the potential blinders they may have in various situations; he noted the importance for open communication, active listening, and approachability that allows the leader to learn from followers (2020b).

Empathy

Skilled communication is guided by empathy, allowing a leader to influence others through an understanding of what to say, how to say it, and what kinds of questions need to be asked (Campbell, 2017). Skilled communication requires an ability to understand others, while empathy strengthens the existing relationships. Pedersen and Pope (2010) stated that good relationships are dependent upon the establishment of empathy providing a degree of humanism and behaviorism that increases awareness in order to prevent false assumptions and protect against incomplete comprehension. A servant leader mindset promoted understanding of follower intentions and perspectives – related to lived experiences, feelings, and perceptions of another (Pedersen et al., 2008; Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011) – having an open mind and valuing inputs from others (Tran & Spears, 2020).

Empathy can heal miscommunication and enable solutions between a leader and follower (Campbell, 2017), especially when employing emotional healing to be sensitive to the personal concerns of followers (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018; Liden et al., 2014) through open dialogue during project planning (Sanchez, 2018). Emotional health is shown to be important for employees to achieve peak performance, supported by a healing and forgiving leadership mentality that ensured a healthy workplace and that followers had access to necessary resources (Tran & Spears, 2020). A healing mentality focuses on development of one's self and others to be strong by becoming whole. Greenleaf (2002) wrote, "There is something subtle communicated to one who is being served and led if, implicit in the compact between servant-leader and led, is the understanding that the search for wholeness is something they share" (p. 50).

The ability for a leader to let go of any perceived wrongdoings can further strengthen the leader-follower relationship (McCullough et al., 2000). Servant leaders showed that they were happy with follower actions and made a positive impact on their lives, exhibiting cognitive awareness for the psychological perspective of others with feelings of warmth and compassion to facilitate the development of high-quality interpersonal relationships (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). This atmosphere of trust helped followers feel accepted and understand that mistakes will be met with guidance and not punishment or rejection (Ferch, 2005), shown to bring out the best in people (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).

Beck (2014) noted that servant leaders display empathy with skillful communication and developed listening skills, which made them proficient in facilitating emotional healing of followers. Servant leaders allow followers to heal by creating an environment where employees can voice personal and professional issues (Liden et al., 2008). While empathy is the emotional response to the perceived plight of another (Snyder & Lopez, 2007), emotional healing can be best characterized as taking the time and opportunity to see the world through the eyes of others (Beck, 2014). These abilities provide a leader with insight into what followers are thinking, leveraging communication and understanding to become an example worthy of following. These characteristics then tie into developing followers into future leaders.

Awareness of Self & Others: Authenticity, Welcomes Feedback

Self-Awareness

A leader with strong self-awareness is able to express their true self through authenticity (Harter, 2002), representing their professional role with whom the individual

truly is as a person (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Self-awareness is important for all military members, refining critical thinking and problem-solving skills that aid in the development of courses of action (COAs) presentation to support decision-making (Brownhill & Pierce, 2013), all extremely important aspects of USAF intelligence operations. A USAF squadron commander and their followers can develop a positive and professional relationship through frequent self-assessment. Notable authors have discussed self-awareness as a servant leadership characteristic, being the ability to think deeply about one's own emotions and behaviors, while also understanding how they affect other people and the professional environment (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Tran & Spears, 2020). Awareness has been described as important for great leaders seeking knowledge in order to develop wisdom for the leader and their organization (Kant, 1978; Plato, 1945). A leader with strong self-awareness understands their own strengths and weaknesses, while also asking others to provide feedback and having the ability to manage emotions.

Beck (2014) understood self-awareness as a part of a leader building wisdom, with servant leaders having demonstrated a combination of awareness for self and their surroundings in order to anticipate potential consequences. This note describes that self-awareness is a supporting characteristic for other servant leadership characteristics. Beck identified past research from Sternberg (1998) that developed a model for the balance theory of wisdom to emphasize priorities of an organization and balance self- and other interests for a professional environment that may achieve common good for all. Self-awareness promotes strong resiliency and an ability to bounce back and grow from adversity, learning from experiences and adapting (Biese, 2017) to become one's best

self. Self-awareness and reflection allow a leader to learn from failures, and such behavior can be learned and replicated by followers so that all professional encounters can be learning experiences.

Authenticity

Researchers emphasized the value of authenticity in leadership, but more is to be done in understanding how such authenticity is perceived by followers (Zheng et al., 2020). Social identity theory (SIT) proposed self-identification for a leader's uniqueness and sense of belongingness, which studies reveal have a positive impact on perceived authenticity (Zheng et al., 2020). Authentic leadership has four components: balanced processing, internalized moral perspective, relational transparency, and self-awareness (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Many times, there are recognized overlaps between authentic leadership, transformational leadership, and servant leadership. Walumbwa et al.'s (2008) research on authentic leadership highlighted morals, open and honest communication, and self-awareness. The importance of authenticity is the impact it has on the culture of an organization, citing back to social identity and creating an environment that all members feel welcome and valued (Zheng et al., 2020).

One study analyzed authentic leadership's influence on creativity and innovation (Muceldili et al., 2013), two influences shown throughout this literature review to come from servant leadership. Self-awareness was a key factor for developing authentic leadership (Muceldili et al., 2013). Morality and ethics were part of the foundation for authentic and servant leadership, both of which have surged in interest during the 21st century (Lemoine et al., 2019). Some recent studies have highlighted how different leadership practices overlap and can complement each other, rather than attempting to

force a divide between each. The social aspect of the leader-follower relationship, noted with social exchange theory and social learning theory, explains the influence of morality in leadership and the overlap between authentic leadership and servant leadership to enhance followers' growth (Lemoine et al., 2019).

Additionally, research highlighted how servant, authentic, and transformational leadership all attempt to increase organizational performance. However, transformational leadership has emphasized charisma and doing what is best for the organization, compared to servant leadership focused on what is best for followers (Williams et al., 2018). Research on service indicated leaders performing self-sacrifice as a tactic, seen in aspects of both transformational and servant leadership (Matteson & Irving, 2006), and several sets of authors noted additional common characteristics (Smith et al., 2004; Stone et al., 2004). However, service conducted in transformational leadership is meant to elicit a response from followers, compared to servant leadership where it is a way of life.

Comparatively, implicit leadership theory (ILT) proposed that perceived authentic leadership enables follower mindfulness and well-being (Zhang et al., 2020). Zhang et al. (2020) highlighted the importance of the followers' perceptions of authenticity and how personalities may affect their perceptions of a leader's behavior. Thousands of leadership publications forget about followers as being an essential part of the equation with follower actions often being dependent on leader characteristics (Carsten, 2016). Servant leaders understand the need for authenticity with their emotions in order to enhance the cognitive process of followers and their own decision-making, developing collective goals and showing appreciation for the work of followers (George, 2000).

Welcomes Feedback

Shared experiences have made teams stronger in the face of adversity and a servant leader mindset has promoted 360-degree feedback for a two-way vector check between leaders and followers (Prosser, 2010). Acceptance to feedback is another characteristic that builds trust and respect, which strengthened between a leader and follower can promote buy-in to the leader's vision, while leveraging humility and empathy to present authenticity (Keith, 2016) and build team cohesion with a sense of community (Sipe & Frick, 2015, p. 6). These interwoven characteristics are highlighted together in the data analysis as a support for influencing team cohesion and community citizenship.

USAF intelligence squadrons must remain adaptive and agile to an ever-changing world, with increasingly complex problem sets. Leadership must also be adaptive to complex human relationships (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007) for a squadron commander leading a variety of personality types. In remaining adaptive, a leader must be open to feedback so they understand how to best lead each member, each team, and multiple teams within an organization. DeRue (2011) looked beyond the standard hierarchical leadership focus and put the responsibility on both the leader and follower to maximize efficiency of organizational processes. Hunt (2004) stated, "leadership (is) a shared influence process in which...any member of a group or social system may carry out at any time" (p. 25). The USAF's increasing focus on feedback and follower input shows followers that each member is important to the success of their organization and the USAF as a whole.

USAF 360-Degree Feedback

360-degree feedback has been a priority for USAF leader-follower relationships in recent years, requiring in-person discussions and allowing the follower to provide their own perspective on leaders in the chain of command and the organization. This type of feedback can help measure leadership potential at all levels within an organization, instead of simply measuring individual skills and productivity metrics (Lowney, 2005). Despite a RAND Corporation study on 360-degree feedback finding that it was not advisable in 2015 for the military, it also noted that services could benefit from using 360-degree feedback as a tool for developing leaders (Hardison et al., 2015). Additionally, Stark (2018) noted that 360-degree assessments and feedback is only useful if the leader is open to it, and it includes feedback from both subordinates and peers. Servant leaders who welcome feedback stand to gain a great deal from the process, and reinforce their authenticity with followers and better understanding follower concerns.

Compassionate Collaboration & Persuasion***Compassionate Collaboration***

Servant leaders strengthen relationships and create a culture of collaboration, understanding that team success relies on all team members, not just the leader (Sipe & Frick, 2015). Koonce (2016) further described a direct relationship between people-oriented leaders who used a collaborative mindset to include followers in problem-solving and decision-making processes. As noted by Johnson et al. (2017), these leaders incorporated feedback from all and secured follower and team buy-in to build a sense of community. With shared trust and empathy, the leader-follower relationship stimulated a willingness to share good and bad experiences which, in turn, created a sense of unity and

collaboration (Tee et al., 2013). A collaborative mindset and ability to discuss any and all topics is critical to USAF intelligence squadrons performing analysis on a variety of world issues. Servant leaders must facilitate healthy debates and manage disagreements between employees, respectfully and constructively (Sipe & Frick, 2015). Compassionate collaborators expressed appreciation for all inputs and negotiate conflict through TEAM – Together Everyone Achieves More (Sipe & Frick, 2015). Kanter (2020) noted that recent times of crisis required leaders to rely on collaboration to fix deficiencies, solve new problems, and take advantage of opportunities. For a military at war for 20 years and systemic struggles of suicide and sexual assault, USAF Airmen may feel themselves in constant crisis mode at work and in their personal lives.

Military doctrine and tenets are a great foundation, but only if actually implemented by leaders in a way that supports followers and the organization. Flexibility is a key tenet of airpower supremacy (Pinnel, 2008), which highlights why collaboration is important to USAF units. Flexibility has been important to strategic airpower since famed Italian Gen. Giulio Douhet from 1912-1915 and will continue to be important to USAF intelligence professionals in the years to come as they continue to provide support to evolving space operations and joint warfighters (Picariello, 2020). Collaboration has built agreements both internal and external for organizations, relying on clear communication to support decision-making and increase stakeholder buy-in (Gordon, 2020).

Compassionate and moral leadership have eased periods of transition and turmoil (Spears, 1998), and a leader's ability to be adaptive to complex and changing environments has facilitated creativity and innovative solutions (Tatum et al., 2019).

These characteristics are important to USAF intelligence squadrons with constant changes being implemented in order to stay ahead of adversaries regarding technology development and strategic analytical assessments. Additionally, some organizational structures can enhance the influence of servant leadership on creative behavior and employee job satisfaction (Neubert et al., 2016). However, there are still limited studies on how servant leadership affects both internal and external stakeholders.

Persuasion

Servant leaders have used persuasion rather than authority, which encouraged followers to take action (Spears, 2010). This use of persuasion is done through genuine care for others and not in a transactional or authoritarian manner. This persuasion aims to build consensus in groups with everyone supporting a decision, and a collaborative mindset can secure follower and team buy-in that is supported by including all in the decision-making process (Olson & Simerson, 2015). There also is a balance between a leader being an expert in order to inspire and persuade followers to listen, while also understanding that many followers within a USAF intelligence squadron have more specific expertise on given problems. Beck (2014) noted persuasion as a cornerstone to a leader's ability to influence others. Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) also found that leaders used persuasion to influence others from a servant leader mindset with an ability to conceptualize greater possibilities through encouraging others to dream great futures for both themselves and the organization. As a part of servant leadership, persuasion creates an ability to influence others without relying on formal authority (Van Dierendonck, 2011).

Empowering Followers: Career Growth & Leadership Development

Empowering followers means providing them with freedom to take action on their own to solve problems (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018; Liden et al., 2014), while staying committed to their professional growth. Servant leaders focused on helping followers grow and succeed, with a genuine concern for their career development (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018). Servant leaders prioritized the concerns of others and the holistic development of followers (Hunter et al., 2013; Liden et al., 2008; Van Dierendonck, 2011). McChrystal mentioned the importance that leaders see themselves as cultivators and not simply decision-makers, functioning as a “node in a network, rather than the top apex of a triangle” (Haigh, 2018, para. 14). In turning the leadership triangle upside-down, a leader empowers followers instead of controlling them, noted as *power for and with* instead of *power over*, the art of getting things done through people.

Power For

Mary Parker Follett (1863-1933) was a pioneer in the fields of organizational theory and organizational behavior, publishing works on classical management theory and admonishing micromanagers (Metcalf & Urwick, 2013). She believed leadership should be defined by the capacity to increase the sense of power among those being led. This power hinges on the leader-follower relationship and the expectation that every member of an organization works hard as part of the team. As noted by Follett, leaders should practice co-active power and work with their followers to ensure each member feels valued as much as the others. Structure in a hierarchical organization is still important, but all members should feel valued and not diminished as a subordinate with the manager taking all credit. Follett theorized the practice of group-work and community

development within an organization (Smith, 2020). The thought of an organization being a democracy only works if leaders prioritize peoples' needs, while fostering their desires and aspirations to benefit all members and the organization. A selfless mindset allows members to feel like part of a team. Additionally, Follett discussed community, creative experience, and education (Smith, 2020), focusing management theory on coordination among workers. Organizational community citizenship looks at group networks rather than hierarchical structures, focusing on the influence of human relations between members. Organizations are like social systems and leaders must focus on the growth of others to benefit the group and achieve common goals.

Building people power is key to successful change or continued success of an organization (Levins Morales & Miller, 2011). Power is the ability to act or do with the capacity to produce a result, or influence the effectiveness of achieving a desired outcome (Levins Morales & Miller, 2011). Organizations can do more when power is given to the people as the experts to best support leaders. Empowerment has aimed to motivate followers in a manner that enables them and encourages their growth (Conger, 2000). Empowerment has promoted self-confidence among followers through proactively encouraging self-directed decision-making (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011), as well as information sharing and coaching to inspire innovative performance (Konczak et al., 2000).

The servant leadership aspect of empowerment is that the leader believes each individual adds intrinsic value to the organization (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). The 2018 National Defense Strategy outlined the need to out-think, out-maneuver, out-partner, and out-innovate adversaries by leveraging the cognitive capacity and

adaptability of each member of a respective group (Tatum et al., 2019). A commander's job is to nurture the environment for followers to realize their full potential, unleash brilliance, and provide quality recommendations for decision-makers to act.

Future Oriented Mindset

Empowerment has inspired followers to accomplish great tasks, but leaders must charge them with such tasks and give them the freedom to present surprisingly exceptional results (Petersen, 2011). This mindset also understands that no individual is perfect, but that empowerment gives them the motivation to do the best of their ability. Encouragement allowed people to imagine future possibilities, not weighed down from any helplessness from past losses or failures (Kanter, 2020). A future-oriented mindset is important for morale and a sense of purpose for followers, while being empowered with a shared team purpose. Such empowerment has inspired follower growth with servant leaders prioritizing the professional development of everyone on their team (Spears, 2010), while providing each with the education, training, and tools necessary for success.

This servant leader mindset of empowering followers has also inspired strong followership, which provides opportunities for followers to influence leadership outcomes (Tee et al., 2013). The people and relationships in an organization are its greatest currency, as servant leaders can inspire change in individuals, teams, an organization, and overall community (You Not Me, n.d.). Servant leaders have understood that they are part of the social identity within their team and organization (Tee et al., 2013), not acting as if they are above or better than others. A *you not me* mindset transforms the culture within an organization through authentic leader-follower

relationships that build teams. This mindset also provides a customer service mentality, simultaneously increasing organizational production and employee job satisfaction.

Foresight & Building Community

Servant leadership shifted the focus from leadership to citizenship, and from individuals to community (Block, 1998). According to Block (2018), fragmented parts of society not working together result in individuals being marginalized and not achieving their full potential. Alternatively, leaders can motivate followers to become part of the community within an organization and anywhere else they can find commonality to support all to become better humans within society. Leaders are builders and military organizations must treat members as part of a family if they hope to produce more than 9-to-5 clock watchers. The aspect of being a part of something bigger than one's self also promotes foresight for future possibilities and opportunities. This shift from leadership to citizenship creates the capacity within an organization to allow for more people to achieve what previously was simply expected of the leaders. All members become equally important to mission accomplishment.

Foresight

USAF senior leaders understand the need to have foresight on future requirements and develop followers into future leaders. Visionaries must imagine possibilities and anticipate challenges of the future that can begin now with a sense of purpose to prepare for them (Sipe & Frick, 2015). Every challenge faced creates a new sense of normal, with new routines and new technologies that drive a quest for new standards (Kanter, 2020). USAF intelligence squadrons must stay ahead of the innovation curve to maintain a competitive advantage against adversaries, noting that creativity must be coupled with

courageous decision-making and action. Foresight is closely related to conceptualization and servant leaders have used analytical skills to project potential future outcomes by learning from past experiences, while also understanding the consequences of decisions for the future (Tran & Spears, 2020) through an assessment of alternatives. Leaders with foresight rely on their instincts and intuition because they have learned from past successes and failures. Research highlighted the need for developing followers into future leaders and current leaders must have the foresight to do so, prioritizing the needs of followers and the organization (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; George, 2003; Van Dierendonck, 2011) over that of their own individual career.

Building Community

Empowering individuals is an important aspect of servant leadership, but empowering teams can create a sense of community for all members to unite and inspire each other, especially during difficult times (Kanter, 2020). Servant leaders have the foresight to create value for the community (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018; Liden et al., 2014), and aiming to build community within the organization that increases follower engagement, mutual trust, and establishing stronger long-lasting relationships (Spears, 2010). Building community requires opportunities being presented for people to interact with each other across the organization. The term community relates to a focused population, notably the community within an organization or intelligence squadron for this study but also the USAF community as a whole or the community of USAF intelligence personnel. The USAF does this every day as intelligence professionals communicate with other USAF and joint military personnel around the world, as well as sending groups to PME courses and other advanced training with individuals outside of

their respective squadrons. Examples of building community could be in organizing social events and designing workspaces that encourage open communication, or social areas for breaks. The USAF tends to prioritize these aspects of leading organizations, encouraging followers to take responsibility for the work they do in support of the overall organization's priorities, while reminding them of their significant contributions.

USAF intelligence squadron commanders only serve two years in said position, many times never having worked in that squadron prior to taking command. It is important for them to view those two years as an opportunity to positively impact the organization with the perspective of it benefiting the USAF community as a whole. Leaders who view their organization as a community can realize how to maximize potential through care of others, noting each individual's expertise and fostering one-on-one relationships to develop future leaders. Community provided mutual understanding and value that can inspire growth and innovation (Blazynek et al., 2020). Additionally, when followers believed that leaders care about them, they were more cooperative and invested in the organizational priorities, culture, and community (Campbell, 2017). This human experience cultivates an *in-group* and provides an identity for the organization, promoted by leaders who focus on the mantra *one of us* (Robbins & Judge, 2018; Haslam et al., 2011). Without this focus on care and follower development, top performers will look elsewhere for leaders who value and challenge them (Roberts, 2018).

Systems Thinker & Conceptualization

USAF intelligence professionals went through a significant change in 2019 with the standup of Sixteenth Air Force (16 AF) as the Information Warfare (IW) Numbered Air Force (NAF). This shifted some of the previous systems in place and required buy-in

from followers, which was accomplished by allowing members at all levels of the organization to provide inputs during focus group sessions. These big changes required leadership that understood the systems within an organization and could conceptualize the adjustments necessary for internal and external processes (Burke, 2018). Leaders must think of their team as a network of positive relationships with each member contributing as part of a system, Henning (2020) noted the roles of servant leadership being those of systems thinker, hope merchant, and identity inventor.

Systems Thinker

A servant leader thinks and acts strategically with awareness to lead in a way that manages change and balances the whole organization, with effective utilization of its parts (Sipe & Frick, 2015). A systems thinker applies servant leadership principles to decision-making and integrates input from all members, while considering the greater good. A systems thinker focuses on teaching followers how the organization operates internally, but also providing them with an understanding of the whole picture of how the organization fits in with everything external.

This concept is critical to USAF intelligence squadrons, with so many young Airmen always going through initial qualification training (IQT) and mission qualification training (MQT) in order to perform the basics of their job. These qualifications are meant to make USAF professionals mission ready (MR) and combat mission ready (CMR) (Matthews, 2015). These certifications require currency and proficiency, but IQT and MQT are just the basics. Leaders must continue education through daily mentorship, weekly continuation training (CT), and providing an understanding of how each individual's job supports the National Defense Strategy

(NDS). In order to do this, a USAF leader must be knowledgeable about their internal systems and also external organizations to provide proper education and training. All of these training requirements are the responsibility of squadron commanders in order to complete their directed mission.

Systems thinkers are comfortable with complexity and demonstrate adaptability in an ever-changing world. DeRue (2011) concluded that leadership is a complex human interaction that has relied on social systems, and Uhl-Bien (2006) stated, “Leadership (is) the process by which social systems change through structuring of roles and relationships” (p. 668). USAF systems also allow for subordinate leaders to make decisions or understand at which level in the chain of command a certain type of decision can be made. The leader-follower relationships up and down the chain of command promote a system where all members participate in the decision-making process, noting established patterns within respective organizations. The USAF structure in an organization creates a system that is easy to teach and understand for members.

Conceptualization

Conceptual skills come from leaders helping followers gain knowledge about the organization and how to be successful in support of the mission (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018). Conceptualization is the ability to look at the big picture and not simply focus on singular tasks or situations (Tran & Spears, 2020), which is important for intelligence analysts serving a customer’s needs and not simply accomplishing a list of tasks. Servant leaders can use such skills to develop an organizational strategy with clear mission and vision statements, while also identifying the roles and responsibilities of

various teams and individuals. Followers are better suited to be successful if given clear direction to support long-term objectives.

A leader's approach will set the organization's culture and climate. Servant leaders are focused on a culture of continued learning and promoting critical thought [conceptualization] (Maxwell, 2019). Conceptualizing problems through a servant leadership lens can help lead change and develop sustainable solutions.

Conceptualization starts with understanding current systems in an organization and allowing for open dialogue between leaders and followers to present ideas for improvement. This dialogue relies on a foundation of trust and shared values, as part of servant leadership and the quest for empowerment of followers (Joseph & Franco, 2020). Dialogue allows for critical reflection and action on the conceptualized options. Tran and Spears (2020) noted Pope John XXIII's use of servant leadership in prioritizing conceptualization – described as looking beyond day-to-day operations – and foresight – anticipating possible future outcomes – doing so through the use of courage (p. 126).

Moral Authority & Courage

Courage

Courage is a characteristic that has distinguished a servant leader from others by challenging conventional models of behaviors (Hernandez, 2008). Courage also promoted innovation and creativity with a leader being adaptive to overcome internal and external difficulties for the organization (Tatum et al., 2019). Courage in leadership promoted proactive behavior and relying on values and convictions to govern one's actions (Spears, 2010), instead of reactive behavior more typical of task management. USAF intelligence squadron commanders should be expected to uphold core values and

exhibit moral courage when faced with difficult decisions. Squadron commanders are entrusted with authority under the Uniformed Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) but expected to act with moral authority. With this authority, a USAF squadron commander must have strong moral courage, defined by Kidder (2006) as the center where principles, danger, and endurance converge.

Moral courage can promote a group's organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), which is based on the concept that a leader modeling ethical behavior will influence followers to mirror such behavior (Mansur et al., 2020). USAF leaders are expected to lead with moral courage, both to lead by example and to create a positive organizational culture that promotes OCB. Moral courage has shown to be in line with a servant leader mindset, performing heroic acts of altruism and compassion when other leaders may not act (Monroe, 2010). Standing up for those who cannot stand up for themselves is exactly what USAF professionals see every day, and this concept can be applied within an organization on issues big or small. Leaders with moral courage and altruism recognize common humanity and not dismissing others who may be strangers or new members to the organization. All humans have some innate ethical perspective, but moral courage determines whether or not action is taken when confronted with a scenario that has several options, notably inaction being one.

USAF senior leaders and publications have highlighted a warrior ethos for *officership*, which one proficiency was to demonstrate integrity as it relates to moral courage by doing the right thing even in the face of adversity (Keller et al., 2013). Selflessness in sacrificing personal goals to perform the mission and care for the welfare of followers is critical to USAF squadron commanders, requiring them to have the moral

courage to make difficult decisions (Carver, 1985). These decisions are seen by followers, setting the example that could shape how these followers act as a future leader.

Moral Authority

Covey stated, “sacrifice is the essence of moral authority, and humility is the foundational attribute of sacrifice” (2002, p. 11). USAF personnel understand the need for self-sacrifice and this aspect ties in perfectly with a servant leader mindset. A servant leader has expectations of performance for him or herself and followers, prioritizing respect while inspiring trust and confidence. Moral authority is about the institution and doing what is known to be right, contrasted with positional authority that allows a leader do what they think is right. One important aspect of moral authority that is vital to the success of military organizations is that leaders delegate tasks to empower others with responsibility and authority to make decisions while understanding firm, yet flexible, boundaries. This characteristic creates a culture of accountability, which ties back to integrity and ethical behavior.

Authority is granted to military leaders by the institution and chain of command, but good leaders establish their own authority to lead others through other factors: experience, competence, education, personality, relevance, maturity (Kamena, 2014). This personal authority relies on moral authority, reflective of the leader’s character. Moral authority is when a leader holds one’s self and others to a higher standard of moral and ethical behavior, ultimately translating into credibility and legitimacy (Kamena, 2014). Moral authority “is generated from within (that is, it cannot be given or granted), it is always tested and it is fragile” (Kamena, 2014, para. 2). USAF leaders that exhibit

moral authority tend to focus their energy and efforts on others, representing servant leadership.

As a professional that directly supports mission success in war, USAF intelligence squadrons have an obligation to prioritize morality and ethics. The moral framework of war identified eight aspects to be examined by leaders during the decision-making process: just cause, legitimate authority, public declaration, just intent, proportionality, last resort, reasonable hope of success, end of peace (Cook, 2004, p. 28). In the constant state of war that the U.S. has been in, it is important for commanders to not fall trap to “mission creep” and protect their followers from work that is outside of their charter or mission delegation. Finally, Johnson (2015) stated that followers who work for ethical leaders tend to be more satisfied and more committed to the leader and organization. Ethical leadership can also enhance trust within an organization, which can improve performance. Ethical leaders demonstrate character traits of justice, humility, optimism, courage, and compassion.

Jesuit Values

Leadership with greater love than fear can create professional environments energized by respect, loyalty, compassion, and teamwork (Lowney, 2005, p. 31), which can achieve mutually beneficial goals of all members and enhance productivity of the organization. The term “love driven leadership” may be off putting to military members but it’s more than simply the word *love*. Patterson (2003) discussed love as the cornerstone of servant leadership and follower relationships, using moral love in doing the right thing at the right time for the right reasons. Servant leadership literature noted these behaviors in primarily focusing on followers to meet the needs of others.

Additionally, compassionate love is noted to produce virtuous traits of humility, gratitude, forgiveness, and altruism, as well as servant leader behavior of empowerment, authenticity, stewardship, and providing direction (Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). In studying compassionate love as a cornerstone of servant leadership, it is understood that love and fear are on opposite ends of the leadership continuum (Patterson, 2010).

This aspect of leadership means engaging others with a positive and caring attitude, prioritizing follower well-being. Leaders must be committed to unlocking the potential in themselves and others. The Jesuits focus on four unique values to create leadership of substance: self-awareness, ingenuity, love, and heroism (p. 9). Heroism is when leaders imagine an inspiring future and aim to shape it, identifying opportunities for growth among followers and the organization.

All members of a team are a leader in some capacity, even if it is simply leading themselves or the projects they are assigned. A servant leader can facilitate such a mindset within an organization, verbalizing the importance of individual internalization and self-concept regarding when an individual is a leader and when they are a follower (Hall, 2004). This is important for USAF intelligence personnel who at various times during a day will shift between being a follower or having to step up as a leader. Additionally, the capacity to cultivate leadership skills requires commitment to personal introspection for consistent development. If a follower hopes to develop into a leader then introspection and self-awareness is key.

Summary

Good leadership is not about advancing one's self, but more about advancing a team (Maxwell, 2013a, p. 3). Research demonstrated that servant leadership promoted

frontline employees' service performance, with an understanding that the influence has been seen at different organizational levels where servant leaders are placed (Wang et al., 2018b). Research and literature publications indicated that servant leadership traits can play an important role for leaders to reinforce relationships with followers, noting that the leader-follower relationship is paramount to servant leadership (Liden et al., 2008; Van Dierendonck et al., 2014). Servant leadership has been shown to not simply be a leadership style or technique, but rather a way of life and behavior that is continuously adopted over time (Spears, 2010). Great leaders can influence exceptional teams through servant leadership characteristics, prioritizing the development of future leaders and achieving organizational priorities. USAF senior leaders have continued to prioritize the growth and development of followers in order to create strong future leaders. Servant leadership has been shown to increase follower loyalty to a leader and commitment to an organization. Furthermore, servant leadership can create value for the USAF community as a whole since personnel move between organizations regularly and can spread these characteristics to leaders and followers in other squadrons. This literature review and research from the dissertation could be used for USAF PME for all ranks. It could also be used as a recommended reading list for Airmen to educate themselves on the various aspects of servant leadership as a philosophy. Military leaders must be supportive and mentor followers to ensure strength in times of uncertainty and adversity, which is critical to intelligence squadrons going through continuous change with technology innovation and leadership personnel.

Air Force Pamphlet (AFP) 35-49 stated, "Leadership is the art of influencing and directing [followers] to accomplish the mission" (Carver, 1985, p. 1) and maximize

performance. Further, USAF top Generals of the past are noted in defining leadership as a process of influence that gains trust and respect of followers to move them and the organization toward goals (Taylor et al., 2008). Leadership is an art, combining various characteristics to influence others to perform at their maximum potential (Barnes, 2006). There are many leadership philosophies and models that can be used to create successful teams and organizations, and leaders should understand that leadership is a spectrum that requires agility to leverage different characteristics in different situations. Understanding leadership as a spectrum promotes critical thinking and a results-oriented framework to analyze alternatives for problem solving, doing the right thing at the right time for the right result (Leadership Spectrum Profile, n.d.). An example within the servant leadership characteristics is understanding when to focus on innovation [foresight] for the future and when to strengthen internal systems [systems thinker], which have an influence on talent retention, culture, productivity, and other factors in the organization.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Using a qualitative methodology and phenomenological research design, this dissertation in practice (DIP) explored the servant leadership characteristics of USAF intelligence squadron commanders from the perspective of career-long lived experiences of USAF intelligence senior enlisted leaders (SELs) in the rank of E-8 Senior Master Sergeant (SMSgt). Phenomenological research designs are used to explore the commonality of lived experiences for a particular group and relationship between the work environment and follower outputs (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data collected highlighted the lived experiences of participants and what characteristics they believed fell into the realm of servant leadership. These results were then tied back to some of the characteristics identified by previous research on servant leadership. Additionally, the results highlighted the influences that servant leadership characteristics showed on followers, from the perception of the follower. These influences were compared to previous research that noted the same influences from the implementation of servant leadership characteristics. In this research, interviewing USAF intelligence SELs provided the valuable perspective of followers. Servant leadership research has been largely void of clarification on which servant leadership characteristics influence follower well-being and outcomes (Panaccio et al., 2015). The current study aimed to highlight this gap in research while addressing it in the context of USAF intelligence squadrons.

Research Question

How do USAF intelligence squadron commanders who exhibit servant leadership characteristics influence the lived experiences of USAF intelligence senior enlisted leaders as followers?

Method

The intent of this qualitative research was to discover what servant leadership characteristics were most important to the participants, and illuminate their lived experiences by sharing stories and highlighting the influences of servant leader commanders (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). The phenomenon examined was servant leadership as noted by USAF intelligence SELs when exhibited by former squadron commanders. Research with a phenomenological design can be used to explore and describe the experiences of participants (Sheppard et al., 2020), which allows researchers to highlight the terms used in describing lived experiences. The interview protocol was validated by the DIP chair and Creighton University IRB, after an initial focus group utilizing USAF intelligence members in the rank of E-7 to ensure successful data collection. The focus group was USAF intelligence E-7s who worked with the researcher and were willing to provide candid recommendations for any changes to how questions were framed, and this was done during off-duty time through the use of Zoom (Brooks, 2020; <https://www.zoom.us>), which was not recorded. Data analysis relied on NVivo coding (<https://qdatraining.com/coding-in-nvivo-12-mac/>) to determine patterns and highlight the most frequently used codes. Hand coding was used to combine the codes from all participants into a single spreadsheet and identify similar codes, which were then bucketed with like terms and represented as overall themes for the characteristics and influences of USAF servant leader intelligence squadron commanders. The demographic data was noted to provide a framework of the types of people who participated and inform future researchers.

Research Design Overview

A phenomenological design was chosen to enable the participants to share their lived experiences with USAF intelligence squadron commanders who exhibited servant leadership characteristics. There is no assumption that the entire population of interest has worked in a USAF intelligence squadron with a commander who exhibited servant leadership characteristics. The focus on USAF intelligence E-8 SELs provided a population with similar demographics and all being high ranking in their respective organization for a level comparison of responses, instead of a mixture of ranks. This is best due to the qualitative nature of the study and the small sample size. The narrow focus and senior position of participants yielded quality responses and set a foundation for potential future research. The sample was individuals who volunteered to participate and those who met inclusion criteria as part of the initial questionnaire, being in the rank of E-8 and having worked for servant leader USAF intelligence squadron commanders. The participants provided numerous lived experiences throughout the entirety of their careers.

The focus on individuals working in similar positions across the USAF mitigated the potential for skewed results. This focus also provided some level of assurance that participants have similar professional military education (PME) experiences. A study that includes a variety of ranks and positions could result in greater variety of an understanding for the topic of servant leadership. As of 30 June 2021, the total USAF active duty population was 326,855 with 265,121 enlisted (81%) and 61,734 officers (19%), which 78.7% are men and 21.3% are women (AFPC, 2021). The population used for this study was USAF intelligence personnel in the rank of E-8. A total of 240 USAF

intelligence personnel in the rank of E-8 were contacted – 167 males (69.58%) and 73 females (30.42%).

Participants

Participants were contacted through official USAF email and asked to email the researcher from their personal email if they wished to participate. Higher headquarter executive leadership staff provided a list of the intelligence members in the rank of E-8. This form of contact was acceptable to the USAF Survey Office, and all aspects of the data collection for this research study were done during off-duty time and through personal communication. This research study was not sponsored by the USAF Survey Office but approval was secured through the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force to ensure no concerns with survey fatigue and that all active participation in the research was done during off-duty time. The initial contact identified those willing to participate and the volunteers were sent the screening questionnaire to determine sample size; identifying individuals who met inclusion criteria to provide valuable interview responses. Of the twelve initial responses, one member indicated that they had never worked for a commander who exhibited servant leadership characteristics and three others changed their mind on wanting to participate.

All questions were asked with regard to lived experiences from previous squadron commanders the participants worked for over the course of their career. This helped alleviate any concerns for responses being related to current leadership or potential fear of retribution on participation, as well as social desirability bias in having a desire to answer questions more favorably if discussing a current squadron commander (Saris & Gallhofer, 2014). Using participants with a full USAF career helped provide more

experiences to potentially share and mitigated concerns of bias regarding servant leadership since all indicated some academic experience – mostly through PME or professional development reading on their own time – with the subject given the USAF shift in prioritizing servant leadership characteristics in the last 20 to 30 years.

The sampling plan resulted in including all eight members who were willing to be interviewed and all met inclusion criteria based on questionnaire responses, so none of the eight were excluded. Participants also provided demographic information, which is discussed in the results.

The perceptions of followers concerning their leader's effectiveness play an important role in the leader-follower relationship (Van Dierendonck et al., 2014). Characteristics that contribute to a leader's effectiveness are important because they provide followers with a sense of trust in the leader, and there is an increased likelihood to follow competent and effective leaders. Since servant leaders attribute successes to followers, the participant experiences in the interviews related to the characteristics and how that influenced them over time. Publications from experts and researchers on the subject of servant leadership provided a strong literature review as a foundation that allowed for relevant questions during the interview process.

Data Collection

Interviews were conducted with selected individuals based on inclusion criteria. The interviews involved open-ended questions intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants regarding the influence of servant leadership characteristics on the individuals as a follower, as well as the influence on the organization as a whole (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 187). This was the appropriate interview protocol in order

to allow varying responses for participants to share their perspectives without being constrained to yes/no or scaled responses.

Data Collection Procedures

The screening questionnaire and interview protocols were developed using past research studies as a foundation for appropriate questions regarding servant leadership (Van Dierendonck et al., 2014). The screening questionnaire was confirmed by DIP chair to ensure it was sufficient enough to identify which members in the population should be interviewed as part of the sample, as well as ensuring it is short enough to ensure quality responses and high response rate. Both the questionnaire and interview protocol were field tested with experts in the USAF intelligence profession in the rank of E-7, but not anyone who would later participate in the study. Questions were then adjusted and later refined through input from other relevant professionals, mentioned below. Questionnaires were used first to understand the participant experiences and likelihood of providing quality responses in interviews that can be thematically analyzed (Sheppard et al., 2020).

The interview protocol was discussed with two former USAF intelligence squadron commanders. Contact was also made with Dr. Jeff Miller who taught Introduction to Servant Leadership at Creighton University. He recommended verbiage for the interview questions. A focus group was held to field test the questions as a pilot (Richards & Morse, 2007) and determined whether the questions were formulated properly, providing inputs for possible adjustments. This was done with the same group of E-7s to maintain continuity throughout. Publication data was obtained from professional military journals, news articles and quotes from military leaders, as well as Creighton University Library for access to scholarly research.

Data Collection Tools

The data collected from participants was their perceptions and opinions as to the influences on followers and squadrons. It was not possible for the researcher to formally request official records regarding performance of squadrons and the commanders leading them during various periods of time, which makes it even more important to have valuable input from the interviews and to highlight that the research represents the perceptions of the participants. Climate assessment surveys are used to determine unit morale and culture, noting specifics about various leaders within the unit. However, these were not available for use in this research as they are protected and only provided to those within the respective unit. The focus areas for participant responses was on individual performance, squadron performance, culture, morale, job satisfaction, and other areas potentially influenced by the servant leadership characteristics of the commander. The thematic analysis represents the voices of participants to provide a complete picture of the data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

Questionnaires. Survey Monkey (n.d.) recommended a questionnaire length of less than 10 minutes with 40 questions having a 10% lower response rate. Questionnaires are used to collect specific information from each participant, as opposed to a survey that aims to aggregate data from multiple respondents to draw broad conclusions from the results. The questionnaire provided an initial understanding of the population and assisted with determining inclusion of the sample participants.

The questionnaire provided understandable instructions, clear wording, and allowed for quick but adequate responses (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). The questionnaire was for internal use in determining the sample participants. The results are not published

as part of the research study, but demographic information was published to show characteristics of participants such as total number members in the participant's USAF intelligence squadron, age, gender, and number of years served in the USAF.

Interviews. Interviews are a standard for qualitative data collection, especially for a phenomenological design (Saunders et al., 2018). Interview questions asked general questions that allowed the participants to provide characteristics from their perspective on servant leadership. The interviews were conducted through video communication using Zoom (Brooks, 2020; <https://www.zoom.us>), and recorded for transcription with ZoomPro, which was then put through NVivo coding software (NVIVO, n.d.). This coding helped uncover richer insights and produce clearly articulated findings that are backed by rigorous evidence. These in-depth one-on-one interviews were done with open-ended questions to mitigate any bias from the researcher and allowed the participant to present their own narrative. Each participant was provided with the transcripts from the interview so they could review and clarify or expand any responses (Richard & Morse, 2007).

Data Analysis

Initial data analysis began with hand coding of the interview transcripts following an inductive process that progressively narrowed the data into sub-groups (Saunders et al., 2018). Inductive reasoning was appropriate for this study because it makes broad generalizations from participant responses and groups similar responses to determine the most important themes (Bradford, 2017). This allowed conclusions to be drawn from the data, discerning a pattern and making a generalization or possible explanation of the phenomenon of servant leadership. An iterative process involved reviewing the data and

rereading the transcripts while examining what emerged from the coding (Sheppard et al., 2020). The codes were collapsed into patterns and further into themes, while ensuring they were appropriate and relevant to the research question.

Open coding was used to highlight the major categories of information, using data aggregation to connect similar terms (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Open coding creates labels for chunks of data that summarizes what is seen, while recording specific words and examples from participants (Gallicano, 2013). Open coding focuses on conceptualization and categorization of phenomena through intensive data analysis (Vollstedt & Rezat, 2019). Data was first broken up to develop codes and use descriptions to better understand participant responses. The coding process recognizes important moments from the data collection but prior to interpretation (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). A concept is a categorized and conceptualized individual code, and the categories are formed from a higher order of concepts. The concepts may relate to each other, indicating patterns and themes from the data. Manual coding was accomplished by identifying codes from each participant and input into an excel spreadsheet, separated between servant leadership characteristics and servant leadership influences. The data analysis process was iterative and reflexive, ensuring that the developed themes are grounded in the original data provided by participants (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Axial coding is the process of taking the categories and finding connections (Gallicano, 2013), relating data together for subcategories that are grounded in the participants voices which is part of the inductive process to link data points (Allen, 2017). This was important for servant leadership as many of the categories were intertwined with like sub-categories. Finally, selective coding seemed appropriate to identify intersection of categories.

Selective coding finds the core variable that includes all of the data (Gallicano, 2013). This can be seen in the data analysis where themes are tied together due to relatable codes.

NVivo (<https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo-qualitative-data-analysis-software/home>) was used to store, organize, and code the open-ended data that was collected from participants (Sheppard et al., 2020). The program was used to analyze the most frequently used words, highlighted as nodes. NVivo allowed the researcher to search nodes easily and identify which participants had the same responses. The program also allowed for developing a word cloud that showed by size of the word how much it was used, compared to other words. There were expected codes and themes as described from previous research on servant leadership characteristics, as well as the influences on followers or organizations. Saldana (2016) mentioned patterns characterized by similarity, difference, frequency, sequence, correspondence, or causation. The reported data includes excerpts from quotations to provide a better understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018), and the results linked back to themes from previous research in the literature review on servant leadership characteristics and influences.

The validity of the data collection and analysis relied on quality procedures, leveraging peer reviews, and advisor quality control. Validity for qualitative research was with regard to the appropriateness of the collection tools, processes, and data analysis techniques (Leung, 2015). The appropriateness of this design was addressed throughout the methodology, and the sampling and data analysis were appropriate in order to obtain relevant data to present viable results. This study examined humanistic psychology and

understanding how individuals are a product of social interaction, aiming to identify findings related to the phenomena of interest. Additionally, this study proved reliable because of the ability to replicate the processes, data collection, and results.

The completed thematic analysis was followed by deductive analysis to look back at the coded data and determine if there was enough evidence to support each theme or whether more information should be gathered (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 181). Deductive reasoning was used to reach a logical true conclusion, which typically starts with a statement and then examination of possibilities to reach a specific and logical conclusion (Bradford, 2017). Once the data was generalized with themes, then deductive reasoning brought the research closer to a truth. Deductive reasoning allows the research to be applied in specific situations. All of this analysis was used to determine the *essence* of the phenomenon in question, USAF intelligence squadron commanders who exhibit servant leadership characteristics and the influences they have on followers and the organization.

Methodological Integrity

The methodological integrity was first and foremost upheld by allowing the data collected from the participants to speak for itself. Each interview was conducted in the same manner, with adequacy of data collection examined after each interview and during the deductive analysis to determine if more data was required. The contributions of participants' lived experiences contributed to the literature by examining the influence of servant leadership attributes on USAF intelligence personnel. The results from this research provide new literature for USAF leadership education.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were a top priority for this research study. In protecting the rights of human subjects, it was important to make it clear upfront that participation was optional and non-attributional for those who did not wish to participate. Additionally, whether individuals in the population decided to participate or not was not shared with anyone in order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Confidentiality means keeping personal information and comments secret, similar to privileged information with an attorney or physician (Find Law's Team, 2020). Anonymity is when an individual's identity is unknown, meaning a name is not associated with the data and there is no reasonable way for others to identify who said which information. Data gathered was marked with a participant number so the researcher could identify with the recordings and transcripts. During analysis, these numbers were randomly sorted into letters from A-to-H for the eight participants, which was used to show similar responses across multiple participants. There was only a written document created that tied participant emails to their participant number in order to minimize the risk of exposure by diligently ensuring anonymity, un-linkability, un-detectability, un-observability, and using pseudonyms (Bachmann et al., 2017). This paper document was then destroyed. This study did not divulge participant names regarding who provided which information, meaning it reported the data anonymously. The raw data from the questionnaires and interviews were kept confidential, reporting on the overall analysis and assessment from all participants. These facts mean the study protected both confidentiality and anonymity.

Researchers collect data from people and about people, requiring them to anticipate ethical issues and protect participants while developing trust with them through

showing integrity of the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Additionally, researchers must guard against misconduct and impropriety so there are no negative impacts to the organizations or community (Israel & Hays, 2006). This means protecting the identity of participants, USAF intelligence squadrons, and any past commanders. Although, highlighting servant leadership characteristics and the influence on followers and organizations is not expected to have any potential for negative reflection on the USAF as a whole or intelligence squadrons within. The identified research question was expected to benefit participants and the USAF intelligence community, and the purpose was explained to participants.

All participants received the same treatment and trust was built from an academic perspective to mitigate any potential perceived power imbalance between officers and SELs. The researcher is in a unit supporting flying operations, not part of an intelligence squadron and he will not be in an intelligence squadron again for likely four or more years. This fact means that the researcher will not be in the chain of command for any of the participants. The researcher is an intelligence officer which could be seen as a conflict of interest, but this was mitigated through full transparency in order not to impact volunteer numbers from the initial recruited population. The participants all planned to continue serving and moving to higher positions, so there were no concerns that the researcher would be a squadron commander leading any of the participants.

Roberts and Hyatt (2019) mentioned informed consent and confidentiality as two main considerations. Participants were not pressured into participating. Informed consent was given verbally in order to eliminate any signed documentation with participant names, as directed by Creighton University IRB, and all participants were asked to

acknowledge their protection of human rights, the sponsoring institution, the purpose of the study, the benefits for participating, the level and type of participation involvement, notation of risks to the participant, guarantee of confidentiality to the participant, assurance that the participants can withdraw at any time, and provision of names of person to contact if questions arise (Sarantakos, 2005).

The researcher protected the identities of the participants by keeping email correspondence separate from the stored questionnaires and recorded interviews that were annotated by a participant number and not a name. Saunders et al. (2015) addressed that anonymizing qualitative research data can be challenging, especially if involving examples from in-depth interviews. A researcher must balance the richness of the data with the anonymity of the participants. Additionally, researchers attempt to mitigate ethical issues with full disclosure, authenticity, and credibility of the research report. Researchers are expected to report all data, even negative results, and showing total numbers and not simply percentages (Marco & Larkin, 2000). Authenticity of the data in the results was paramount for the researcher and ensured participants knew their contributions would be accurately represented. In qualitative research, there is the potential for readers to deduce traits of individuals who participated in the study, which is why the demographic information was mentioned as averages across the sample group. A dominant approach also ensured protecting respondent confidentiality, portraying the results as anonymous and not tied to identifying factors (Kaiser, 2010). These aspects of the data collection and reporting were important to ensure procedural ethics and disclosure to participants of how their information would be handled.

The participants were individuals in leadership positions, notably SELs in the rank of E-8 SMSgt, serving in an advisor role. It was critical that these individuals were made aware of all aspects of this study before they agreed to participate, and understanding that their lived experiences would be shared in the data analysis but not identified by name of who provided which responses. This means that stories shared were represented as an aggregate from all participants to identify similar experiences. Participants were requested to use off-duty time to complete all aspects of this study. All potential participants were first contacted through USAF email with a description of the study and requested that volunteers contact the researcher via Creighton email from their own personal email. Approval to contact potential participants was given by the USAF Survey Office, since this research study was conducted outside of the confines of USAF on-duty time and facilities. Additionally, The Office of the Secretary of the Air Force approved this research study in accordance with Creighton University IRB direction. All data was kept on a password protected laptop and encrypted hard drive. The transcripts were hand coded by key words and plugged into an excel spreadsheet to input into NVivo. The use of NVivo was most beneficial in quickly noting the most used words, while hand coding was used to identify similar codes across multiple participants and noted as such in the findings. NVivo helped provide a visual representation of the most used words.

All participants did first provide verbal informed consent, noting their willingness to participate and understanding of how data would be collected. The data collection and analysis procedures mentioned throughout this methodology mitigated risk of harm to the participants by protecting their identities. Additionally, the USAF intelligence squadrons

are not identified and participants were specifically asked about previous experiences of squadron commanders they have worked for in the past. Participants were requested not to provide answers related to their current squadron commander. Questions were asked in a manner that did not influence the answers and allowed participants to respond based on their own individual lived experiences. Questions were also formed in a manner that aimed to mitigate researcher bias on the topic of servant leadership characteristics and influences. Finally, each volunteer participant was given the right to withdraw from the research at any point.

In preparation for publishing the study results, the researcher ensured data was not tied to specific participant names or study numbers. All of the precautions mentioned in these methods protected the participant identities. Analysis did not side with participants and all perspectives were highlighted, noting any contrary findings or outliers (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Published research highlighted the themes that emerged from the lived experiences of participants, examining the sample as a whole and showing how many participants said similar codes and stories. Ethical concerns are notably important for this study as the research was conducted for academic purposes and not officially sponsored by the USAF, while ensuring adherence to USAF guidelines and adhering to prescribed approval. Copies of the report will be provided to participants and stakeholders and proof of compliance with ethical issues is documented.

Official documents were provided as appendices: IRB approval letter with protocol number and information letter. Please see Appendix A for the research participant's bill of rights. Please see Appendix B for a copy of the information letter. Please see Appendix C for a copy of the interview protocol. Please see Appendix D for a

copy questionnaire to select a sample size from the recruited population. Please see Appendix E for the Servant Leadership Survey (SLS) as sent to participants with [commander] mentioned in place of manager. Please see Appendix F for the participant invitation to solicit volunteers. Please see Appendix G for the SLS with questions ordered by characteristic. Please see Appendix H for the IRB approval letter.

Summary

This DIP used a qualitative methodology with a phenomenological design to examine servant leadership characteristics of USAF intelligence squadron commanders as experienced by followers over the course of a career who now are USAF intelligence SELs in the rank of E-8, SMSgt. This was the most appropriate design for exploring the commonality of lived experiences for the particular population, and this research looked at the noted influence of such servant leadership characteristics. The enlisted core among intelligence professionals have a common culture and many work with each other throughout their careers during different assignments or deployments. This study aimed to provide scholarly research to enhance the USAF's understanding of the influence of servant leadership characteristics on followers, teams, and organizations. The participant population has served a long military career, with the sample average of 19 years. This provided a great deal of experiences to share regarding this dissertation topic. USAF senior leaders have promoted servant leadership characteristics and there are many journal articles or opinion pieces on the topic, but there was not yet scholarly research specific to what this research study aimed to publish.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter examined the findings from the research participants and identified themes developed from the key words mentioned during the interviews. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine the lived experiences of USAF intelligence senior enlisted leaders (SELs) – in the ranks of E-8, Senior Master Sergeant (SMSgt) – as followers of USAF intelligence squadron commanders who exhibited servant leadership characteristics. This study specifically looked at servant leadership characteristics as identified in the literature and supported by Jesuit and USAF values-based teachings, as well as those identified by participants, to determine which have actually been seen in practice from USAF intelligence squadron commanders. This study was guided by the following research question:

How do USAF intelligence squadron commanders who exhibit servant leadership characteristics influence the lived experiences of USAF intelligence senior enlisted leaders as followers?

Participant Demographic Information

All participants were SMSgts with an average 19 years of service and 37.4 years old, of which 75% were male and 25% were female. The overall demographics for the population of interest were 167 males (69.58%) and 73 females (30.42%). The number of personnel in the squadrons of participants varied with an average of 215 members per squadron; the low being 97 and high being 425 personnel. This point is noteworthy because several participants mentioned that servant leadership becomes even more

important when leading larger units, due to limited interactions with every person and needing to leverage lower level leaders to represent the commander.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Measure	Mean	Standard Deviation
Years of Service	19	2.05
Age	37.4	1.77
Number of personnel in current squadron	215	125.1

Presentation of the Findings: Servant Leadership Characteristics

The data has been organized with the major themes and listed in order of the most frequently mentioned by the participants. The servant leadership characteristics were easy to code and theme as they followed very similar to what was extrapolated from the literature review research. NVivo was used to determine these most frequently used words and to organize the word cloud as a visual representation of the data, while hand coding was conducted to tie common codes into themes. This was possible due to the saturation of participants mentioning the same characteristics and similar stories of past USAF intelligence squadron commanders they identified as servant leaders.

The first part of participant interviews focused on the perception of servant leadership characteristics as a whole and identifying which characteristics they have observed from USAF intelligence squadron commanders during their career. Overall, these themes tied together with followers wanting a commander who thinks of what will benefit followers and the organization with their vision and investments, over what may benefit the commander and his or her future career aspirations. The majority of the data reinforced themes from the literature review and positive influences on individual

Servant Leadership Characteristics Themes

All eight participants noted that their USAF intelligence careers involved working for roughly half servant leader squadron commanders and half non-servant leaders, but that they have seen this style more prevalent in recent years than when they first joined the military. The six themes identified were:

Theme 1: The servant leader prioritized what would benefit followers and the organization over what would benefit their career

Theme 2: The servant leader was authentic in their care for others, and showed self-awareness and awareness of others

Theme 3: The servant leader empowered followers and provided top cover to allow risk taking and failure as part of the path towards success and innovation

Theme 4: The servant leader possessed skillful communication, exercising active listening and transparency with followers

Theme 5: The servant leader showed compassion and prioritized collaboration amongst teams in the squadron, as well as with external organizations

Theme 6: The servant leader showed moral courage, integrity, and character by leading by example

The most mentioned code was *people first* and all participants noted that a servant leader was one who prioritized what benefited individual followers and the organization, even if this prioritization may not be what was best for their own upward trajectory and career promotions. This was no surprise and the stories provided on past experiences proved there is a strong presence of servant leader USAF intelligence squadron commanders. The literature review showed similarities between servant leadership and

authentic leadership, which was reinforced by participants noting that their experiences were with genuine leaders who truly cared for others. This care for others was backed by a foundation of self-awareness and awareness of others. Furthermore, a leader who understands their own strengths and weaknesses can then leverage the expertise of followers and trust them enough to empower them to take risks. This was noted as extremely important for intelligence squadrons because of the analytical nature of the profession and the requirement for constant innovation. All commanders must be good communicators but the participants highlighted that servant leaders practice active listening, as well as open and honest communication while bringing followers into some decision-making processes. Reinforcing all of this is morale courage, integrity, and character; followers expect a commander who leads by example. Leaders are obviously expected to have these characteristics but moral authority was noted as what is right in the view of the organizational values and not simply the commander's thought process on right versus wrong. Finally, intelligence squadrons collaborate with numerous other units and a squadron commander must promote a collaborative mindset for their followers.

Theme 1: The servant leader prioritized what would benefit followers and the organization over what would benefit their career

This theme was mentioned as the most important by all eight participants, noting that it is easy for followers to see whether a commander is using their two-year position primarily as an upward trajectory to future senior leader positions or if they truly care about the success of the unit. Prioritizing the success of the unit – people, teams, organization – was noted as a necessary characteristic of a servant leader and was stated as a motivating factor for followers when they feel cared for in this manner. The

participants description of this theme aligned with prior research on servant leadership characteristics. All participants mentioned commanders who put people first.

People First and Care for Others

People first was the most frequently mentioned code, stated multiple times by all participants during the interviews. This inherently tied into the USAF core value of *service before self*, with participants E and F stating servant leader commanders prioritized followers and the unit needs over their own career. This related back to Stark (2019) who noted the careerist commander not being aligned with what followers considered a good leader or what the USAF as an institution hopes to breed. Participant G noted some squadron commanders who seemed to simply be there for the two-year position and solely focused on what would make them look good on paper in order to move up into higher positions.

Care for others was mentioned by participants A, B, C, D, and E, which tied back to the Jesuit Value of *cura personalis*. Participant E noted that servant leadership is “not about what we can do to people but what we can do for them” and that servant leaders “take care of the most vulnerable members in the squadron, having their back.” In feeling cared for and valued, people will want to continue working for a leader and an organization. Moral courage tied into several of the themes, where it can promote a group’s organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) due to a leader modeling ethical behavior (Mansur et al., 2020), and characteristics of altruism and compassion by standing up for those who cannot stand up for themselves (Monroe, 2010).

If a culture of caring is developed, then that will remain even after the leader who was the catalyst has left. Servant leadership was noted as not simply about accomplishing

tasks for prescribed due dates but taking care of people to ensure holistic success.

Participant B noted that “servant leadership is about understanding that things you care about may not align with the things your followers care about” and it “is not just getting things done but taking care of people to ensure success.” The USAF has struggled with retention in some career fields because of members not feeling cared for by their senior leaders.

Participants B and H provided examples when a commander visited them in the hospital; one after an early birth of a child and the other coming home early from a deployment and sitting by a sick parent. The commanders understood these events meant the member would not be at work for a period of time and they came to show care and support in their time of need. Participant H also noted that the commander was leading a squadron of over 600 people and was surprised they would take off-duty time to visit them in the hospital. This is likely something most would not observe in other professions but that is why military leaders try to develop a sense of family within their organizations and the influences of these actions will be discussed later. At its simplest description, participants B and H noted that leaders should treat people like people and not simply a number within the squadron. Research indicated that a leader who employs emotional healing and is sensitive to follower needs can help them get back to full strength and achieve peak performance (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018; Liden et al., 2014).

Participants C and E shared stories of when individuals in their squadrons were going through tough times and needed to spend some duty hours away from their office to handle mental health or other requirements, in order to get back to 100%. The focus on

resilience is a priority for USAF senior leaders and servant leaders understand that taking a member out in order to prioritize their individual needs is best for everyone in the long run. Participant E mentioned a down day their squadron commander called to focus on resiliency and suicide prevention, as suicide rates in the Air Force were on the rise. The commander had everyone in civilian clothes at the base theater to watch movies and relax, while asking some to also share personal stories regarding their support structure while going through difficult times and understanding it is okay to “take a knee.” The commander prioritized open communication and wanted all members to know they are not alone if struggling to make it through a difficult time in their life.

Stewardship

Participant H mentioned stewardship and some other members mentioned codes related to this characteristic. Participant H’s focus was mainly on the squadron commander taking ownership of the unit in a way where they promoted a culture of everyone doing what is best for the organization and all members, and having respectful and productive conversations where individuals may have different perspectives or thoughts on a best course of action (Maxwell, 2013b). Research noted that stewardship breeds social responsibility, loyalty, and team work (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). These influences will be discussed in the influence themes. Servant leaders have understood that each follower is an individual and provides a unique value to the team, which requires stewardship to develop the leader-follower partnership and enhance effectiveness of teams within the squadron (Carsten et al., 2017).

In showing *stewardship* as the senior leader within the squadron, commanders must share success with followers and recognize their accomplishments while

individually owning any failures without trying to place blame on subordinates.

Participant E specifically mentioned servant leaders “sharing success and owning failure, by giving credit to followers.” Participant E did not mention Gen. Goldfein or his book, *Sharing Success – Owning Failure* (2001), when making this comment but participants B and F did; they stated that it provided a strong introduction for new commanders and discussed many characteristics of servant leadership. Participant B noted that such commanders regularly executed this concept by using the word we more than I, showing followers that the organization is about all members and not simply the senior ranking members.

Of note, participants A, C, D, and H did not mention any specific authors on servant leadership; however, participant H mentioned having read scholarly publications during PME and graduate level leadership programs that related to the servant leadership characteristics mentioned. Participant E mentioned Simon Sinek, *Leaders Eat Last: Why Some Teams Pull Together and Others Don't* (2014) and *Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action* (2011), and some former military members: Admiral McCraven who wrote *Team of Teams: New Rules of Engagement for a Complex World* (2015), Gen. McChrystal who is quoted in this DIP regarding humility, and Jocko Willink who is quoted in this DIP for *Dichotomy of Leadership* (Willink & Babin, 2018).

Theme 2: The servant leader was authentic in their care for others, and showed self-awareness and awareness of others

Participants related people first with a leader’s ability to know themselves and others, tying *awareness of self and others* and *authenticity* in this theme back to the first theme. In order for a leader to care for their followers and treat their organization as a

family, they must get to know each member as a person. Participant D stated that USAF leaders, especially squadron commanders, should take a strengths test, notably Gallup's *CliftonStrengths* (2021) which can be found online and is the same test by Don Clifton found in *Strengthsfinder 2.0 from Gallup and Tom Rath: Discover Your CliftonStrengths* (2017). Participants E and H specifically stated servant leader squadron commanders must have awareness of self and others. This tied back to previous research that self-awareness is the ability to think deeply about one's own emotions and behaviors, understanding how a leader's words and actions affect other people and the professional environment of an organization (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Tran & Spears, 2020).

Awareness and Authenticity

Humility was identified by participants D and H as necessary for squadron commanders, who out rank all members in the squadron and can be intimidating for junior enlisted members. Participants B and F noted Colin Powell as an author they have read; Participant F mentioned *It Worked For Me: In Life and Leadership* (Powell, 2014). Both also mentioned characteristics related to staying humble and showing authenticity in knowing your people so that they feel comfortable in bringing their problems to you. Participant B quoted Colin Powell, "When people stop bringing you their problems, you're through as a leader" (Williams, 2011, p. 126). Participant E mentioned Gen. McChrystal's focus on humility, noted by Haige (2018).

Participants B and H noted that commanders must also have enough *emotional intelligence* to understand their members and identify ways to motivate individuals and teams under their command. An example mentioned by participants B, C, E and H was a commander who visited the operations floor during night shift, weekends, or holidays.

Many intelligence squadrons have a twenty-four-seven mission and members working during non-standard duty hours tend to feel forgotten. A leader who stopped by to say hello or bring food to those on such shifts tended to gain respect by showing that they understood what all members of the squadron sacrifice when they cannot spend nights, weekends, or holidays with their own families. Ultimately, this spoke to the need for a commander to be visible to their personnel – noted by participant H as “leadership by walking” – which can depend on the squadron and shifts or work center layout. The importance of this was most noted for intelligence squadrons because many have a non-stop mission with most personnel working during hours when the commander is not typically at work.

Participants A, C, D, E, F, G and H mentioned a commander who truly got to know the people and sought to understand followers, noted by participant E as showing authenticity. Participants C, F, and G mentioned a commander who was supportive of their goals, while trusting them and putting him or herself in their shoes. Participant F also mentioned a commander who actively invested in people and teams within the squadron. A commander’s role is to ensure the most vulnerable members are cared for and that they feel protected by leadership if workplace issues are mentioned; however, a commander must also be careful in showing too much people first to one team or set of individuals. Participant E mentioned that servant leader commanders cannot show favoritism. Any perceived favoritism can quickly erode follower faith in a commander, as they have a duty to make all members feel valued and cared for by all leaders within their chain of command. All participants noted that the follower perception means everything,

and individual opinions of the commander can determine how well teams work together to support the commander's vision for the squadron.

Theme 3: The servant leader empowered followers and provided top cover to allow risk taking and failure as part of the path towards success and innovation

Tying together *people first* and *empowering followers*, participants D and G noted that leaders are expected to provide top cover to allow followers to have freedom to execute their tasks, and participant E noted leaders who stand up for their subordinates. This involves allowing members to take risks and possibly fail in order to “fail forward,” mentioned by participants C and E with the overall expectation of achieving more total success. Gen. Brown, the current CSAF, stated that if you don't fail then you're not learning, when giving opening remarks for the 2021 U.S. Air Force Academy National Character and Leadership Symposium. His 5 tenets were: 1) fail to succeed, 2) challenge the status quo, 3) trust but verify, 4) have attitude, 5) define success (2021). This also related to the sharing of success and owning failure, especially when having to defend followers in discussing failures to senior leaders above the squadron commander.

Servant leaders have sought out the inputs of followers and prioritized their concerns and development (Van Dierendonck, 2011). Commanders must be cultivators and build the organization around them, not below them (Haigh, 2018). Participants reinforced past research that noted a leader should proactively seek contributions from followers (Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011) and understand that no one is perfect but the important part is learning from mistakes (Morris et al., 2005), which requires a servant leader to let go of any perceived wrongdoings in order to strengthen the leader-follower relationship (McCullough et al., 2000). Additionally, Kanter (2020) noted that

encouragement can allow followers to imagine great possibilities, without fear of leaders holding past failures over them. This requires a future-oriented mindset that empowers followers which can increase morale and provide a sense of purpose that inspires professional growth (Spears, 2010), which will be discussed further in the influence themes.

Empower Followers

The ability of a commander to empower followers relied on substantial *trust* in the leader-follower relationship. This has been built through the first two themes mentioned, and ensuring a clear vision was provided and regularly reiterated. Empowering followers was the second most frequent code, mentioned by participants A, B, C, D, E, F, and G. Trusting followers was mentioned by participants A, B, C and F. Participant E expanded more on commanders who are open to ideas from junior enlisted and simply provide a vision with left/right boundaries, making sure not to micromanage. Servant leader commanders must be supportive of followers taking action on their respective projects, while accepting imperfect solutions that can then be refined over time. Participants C, D, E and G noted that a commander should not be involved in the technical details or “in the weeds” of a project, and they must trust their experts by giving them autonomy and freedom of action. The comments on empowering followers very quickly led into the influences of commanders in growing followers and developing them into future leaders, which will be discussed in those themes.

Systems Thinking

Participant C mentioned servant leaders approaching problems strategically, understanding that they can provide the vector but depend on followers to do the work as

the experts. Participants C, D, E and F said the commander should act as the creator but followers must be empowered to “handle the technical details and let good ideas flow.” Additionally, participants A and E said the commander should know each members’ skills and can identify where each member may fit best in a team. Participant C mentioned this as a commander “identifying influencers who can positively impact teams and carry the commander’s initiatives.” Without strategic thought and empowering followers, commanders will waste time in the details and be unable to “see the forest through the trees,” as mentioned by participant D. Followers can work the solutions if given the overarching goal and identified problems to solve. Additionally, participants A, D and E mentioned a leader who understands each individual in order to use of their skills and maximize their potential, while remaining agile and adaptive to evolving situations. In this respect, a commander must also believe in their subordinate teams to accomplish what is delegated to them.

Theme 4: The servant leader possessed skillful communication, exercising active listening and transparency with followers

Communication is extremely important between leaders and followers, especially in large organizations and at all levels of the chain of command. A squadron commander must be able to disseminate an overall vision to the entire squadron and also be able to provide direction to lower level leaders who then take action in the manner they feel is most appropriate in order to satisfy the commander’s intent.

The third most frequently mentioned codes were related to *communication*, with *active listening*, *transparency*, and *open/honest communication*. USAF intelligence squadron commanders who exhibit servant leadership characteristics are expected to

intently listen to the thoughts of their followers as they aim to achieve a greater purpose as an organization than could simply be achieved by the commander him or herself. The participants in this study all mentioned *empathy* and *360-feedback* as important parts of communication from a squadron commander, as well as that communication being open and honest – meaning that followers feel comfortable speaking their mind to superiors – which tied back to *authenticity* in knowing that what a commander says is what they truly mean, being genuine.

Active Listening

Squadron commanders must communicate in a way that is engaging, thoughtful, and shows they are supportive of followers. Participants A, B, C and G mentioned a commander who was engaging and practiced active listening. In providing direction, a commander must believe in followers and mentor them to take ownership of their respective projects and personnel. Active listening is when someone truly hears what another says and even asks for clarification, ensuring open and honest communication that gives followers “the courage to challenge” (Chaleff, 2009, p. 75). Listening and self-reflection help the leader grow and develop a strong long-term leader-follower relationship (Northouse, 2016). Goldfein (2020b) knew that commanders can have blinders on and need to learn from followers by being approachable and practice active listening.

Additionally, commanders who accepted 360-feedback showed they understood that all members can continually improve. These communication skills allowed leaders and followers to be adaptive. Participant G mentioned a commander who stated their “open door policy” and who asked challenging questions when engaging with followers,

which was also noted by participant D. Research indicated that the acceptance of feedback from followers helped build trust and respect, tied to humility and empathy as part of authenticity, while promoting follower buy-in to the leader's vision (Keith, 2016). Additionally, these attributes of a leader can build team cohesion and a sense of community (Sipe & Frick, 2015). Everyone can continually improve their communication skills, which is about more than simply how people express themselves because communication should always be two-way.

Transparency and Empathy

Participants A, B, C, D, E, F and H mentioned transparency and open/honest communication. Communication must be open and honest, but also thoughtful. Tying back to trust and integrity, participants A and F mentioned that thoughtful communication helped teams perform better because the leader explained their decision-making process and listened to alternative ideas or issues that needed to be addressed. A commander who intently thought about decisions and then explained their process to followers gained respect and understanding from all members. This is especially important when listening to issues within the squadron so that recommendations from followers are heard in developing solutions. Such authentic communication is achieved by being engaging and showing *empathy*. Research indicated that leaders who put people first and promoted service before self were those who showed empathy and care for others, which increased leader-follower bonding, honesty, and connection (Campbell, 2017). Empathy has helped build trust and stimulated a willingness for open communication about good and bad experiences, which facilitates a more collaborative work environment (Tee et al., 2013). Participant B noted a commander who inspired

healthy debates and would explain to followers the reasoning for his ultimate decision on a matter, which helped build trust and understanding; even if the follower did not completely agree with the decision, they respected it because of how the commander practiced transparency and open communication. Sipe and Frick (2015) explained how servant leaders facilitated healthy debates and managed disagreements in a respectful and constructive manner.

Theme 5: The servant leader showed compassion and prioritized collaboration amongst teams in the squadron, as well as with external organizations

Only participant E used the term compassionate collaboration and also mentioned compassion for others. Participant A mentioned compassion multiple times and participant B mentioned collaboration multiple times, when referring to a servant leader squadron commander. Koonce (2016) described a direct relationship between people-oriented leaders who used a collaborative mindset that included followers to help solve problems and make decisions. Feedback must be incorporated from followers, and doing so can increase follower and team buy-in because members have a sense of purpose and community (Johnson et al., 2017). Leaders who are compassionate have been able to ease periods of transition and turmoil (Spears, (1998), which also enabled a leader to be adaptive in complex and changing environments while increasing creative and innovative solutions (Tatum et al., 2019) critical to USAF intelligence squadrons.

Compassionate Collaboration

Tying the two terms together, participant G noted servant leaders who are supportive and mentor followers in order to fix issues and solve problems. Participant B mentioned persuasion as part of this theme when influencing followers to take action in

line with the commander's vision. Examples provided were focused around projects for innovation and new technology, which allowed followers to coordinate across teams and with other squadrons without requiring commander oversight. All participants mentioned commanders who mentored followers and focused on developing them into future leaders. Participants E and G mentioned that servant leader squadron commanders wanted to be micro-informed and they did not micromanage followers. Ultimately, a servant leader created a workplace environment that challenged individuals to work together and showed care for the ideas of others. One interesting note from participant C was stating that SNCOs should be more collaborative and care about people, because they are filling senior level positions in-between the commander and the rest of the followers in the squadron which required them to "lead people and not simply be a task manager."

Theme 6: The servant leader showed morale courage, integrity, and character by leading by example

This theme was noted to be important for all leaders but was emphasized for servant leaders because these characteristics strengthen trust from followers and allow all of the other themes to create success in the organization. This theme also ties into ensuring leaders set the standard for others, and was interwoven into several other themes as a necessary foundation.

Moral Courage

Participant E specifically mentioned *moral courage* and participants C, E, F and H mentioned *setting the standard* and *leading by example*, but these terms were more as an assumption for all leaders and commanders no matter their leadership style. Moral

courage and leading by example have been noted to command authority, so this is easy to understand for commanders. Participants D, E, F and H mentioned *integrity* and participants B, D, F and H mentioned *character*, but these also were more assumptions in that all commanders should have these prior to being selected for command. The emphasis on these codes was that a servant leader absolutely needs to have these and that the servant leader squadron commanders observed did. The first USAF core value is *integrity first*, which all participants stated the core values should be a part of any leadership style and not just for a servant leader.

Summary of Servant Leadership Characteristics

The participants mentioned the majority of the themes and characteristics from the literature review – *integrity, people first, skillful communication, awareness of self and others, compassionate collaboration, empowering followers, systems thinking, and moral authority and courage*. The characteristics not mentioned were actually stated as more of an influence of servant leader commanders with a priority for intelligence squadrons looking at ways to innovate – *foresight and building community*.

Presentation of the Findings: Servant Leadership Influences

The servant leader influences took more effort to code since they were not identified in depth during the literature review research. NVivo was used to determine the most frequently used words and to organize the word cloud as a visual representation of the data, while hand coding was conducted to tie common codes into themes. The second part of participant interviews focused on the perception of servant leadership influences on followers, teams, and organizational outcomes from servant leader USAF intelligence squadron commanders. The data analysis revealed six themes, based on the participants'

commander, especially for USAF intelligence squadron commanders. They also noted that servant leaders influenced followers to also be servant leaders. Participants A and C mentioned that non-servant leaders influenced followers to develop into leaders without these mentioned servant leadership characteristics. The six themes identified were:

Theme 1: The servant leader created a culture where followers felt valued, cared for, and part of a common community

Theme 2: The servant leader increased buy-in, creating followers and teams who wanted to follow him/her due to increased trust and squadron members understanding the impact and “why” of their daily tasks

Theme 3: The servant leader increased follower, team, and organizational success

Theme 4: The servant leader helped grow followers and teams in their current capacity, while developing future servant leaders

Theme 5: The servant leader made followers and teams feel empowered to lead their respective responsibilities

Theme 6: The servant leader helped the organization navigate continuous technology and manpower changes

Participants noted that servant leaders created a positive culture for the organizations, which followers felt valued and part of a community, related to research on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and the concept of followers mirroring the characteristics of the leader (Mansur et al., 2020). OCB also tied into research on authentic leadership as it has created a culture and social identity within an organization where all members felt welcomed and valued (Zheng et al., 2020). This and Walumbwa et al. (2008) research on authentic leadership – morals, open and honest communication,

self-awareness – were the primary similarities between servant leadership characteristics identified by participants and authentic leadership characteristics identified in research.

This was tied back to commanders putting people first and caring for followers by treating them like people, not simply a number filling a position. With this culture, a commander increased buy-in for their vision and the squadron's goals, and was reinforced by explaining the "why" of daily tasks and overall priorities. Followers wanted to follow when they trusted leadership to take care of their individual needs, seeking out the commander's input and advice for their future career desires. All participants believed that a servant leader squadron commander developed followers into servant leaders themselves. All participants noted that servant leader commanders made followers feel empowered, giving them the freedom to take risks and lead their respective responsibilities while also defending them to senior leaders if certain projects did not yield the desired level of success. Finally, intelligence squadrons focus heavily on technology and are constantly going through change, which was noted to be more easily navigated with a servant leader commander.

Theme 1: The servant leader created a culture where followers felt valued, cared for, and part of a common community

One common code was that participants stated a servant leader squadron commander made followers feel cared for, supported, and prioritized. This was mentioned by participants E, G and H. Similar codes were also mentioned that tied into this theme. Participants A, B and E mentioned feeling valued, and participant E stated "people will want to leave if they do not feel valued." Participant E also mentioned that servant leader commanders focused on lifting others up, notably when going through a

difficult personal or professional life event. Participants B and C mentioned a sense of belonging and that the commander created a positive and safe work environment.

Participants B, C and E stated that followers felt comfortable coming to the commander to ask for help or advice.

Participants C and E said they felt like a family in the squadron under a servant leader commander. Finally, Participant C also mentioned that followers felt more connected to others in the unit and they felt like the commander was invested in them. Looking back at some of the research, building community in an organization increased follower engagement, mutual trust, and established long-lasting relationships (Spears, 2010). Research also showed that community provides a mutual understanding and shared priorities that inspired growth and innovation (Blazynek et al., 2020). When followers felt cared about by the leader, they were more cooperative and invested in the organization's priorities, culture, and community (Campbell, 2017). Treating followers in a more human way has cultivated an in-group where followers feel like one of the team (Robbins & Judge, 2018; Haslam et al., 2011). Without such care for others from the leader, top performers will leave to find a job where they do feel valued and challenged (Roberts, 2018).

Theme 2: The servant leader increased buy-in, creating followers and teams who wanted to follow him/her due to increased trust and squadron members understanding the impact and “why” of their daily tasks

An increase in follower buy-in and feeling like a stakeholder in the organization was mentioned by participants C, F and G. This helped build teams with followers who wanted to be at work and wanted to work harder in order to increase squadron

effectiveness and success. This was mentioned by participants B, C, G and H while adding that the followers are then invested in the leader and the squadron. Participants A, C, E, F and G stated that a servant leader squadron commander increased the team building and cohesion within the unit and also helped improve communication at all levels, noting “teams work better together.” Previous research mentioned that servant leaders can increase morale and create a positive spirit in an organization, providing the glue to increase team cohesion and provide power for and with people that builds trust and builds a better organization (Keith, 2016). Follower morale comes from these sources: “a feeling that they have an important job to do, a feeling that they are trained to do well, and a feeling their great work is appreciated and recognized” (Smith, 2003, p. 53). Sipe and Frick (2015) also mentioned servant leaders building team cohesion and a sense of community, tying these first two themes together.

This is all rooted in trust between the leader and follower, supported by integrity and common goals. Quick and Goolsby (2013) noted that integrity from a leader can promote honesty and authenticity within an organization, a culture “anchored in the common good, not in the individual self-interest” (p. 3). Participants B, C, D, F and G stated that servant leader squadron commanders increased trust within the unit, and participant B stated that “mutual trust increased performance at all levels.” Additionally, they explained the “why” and the impact from followers, noted by participants A, C, E and F as increasing job satisfaction and participant A stated that “servant leaders inspired followers and teams.” Finally, Participants A, C, E and G noted that servant leader commanders understood what motivated followers and they increased motivation in teams and the entire squadron.

Theme 3: The servant leader increased follower, team, and organizational success

All participants stated that servant leaders created a more successful squadron, at all levels. This started with job satisfaction and morale, as servant leader commanders created a positive culture where success was shared and appreciated. Servant leaders invested in people – tying back to people first – understanding that they must treat people as people, but then realizing such leadership characteristics increased the return on investment because of follower increased productivity. Participant A stated that servant leader squadron commanders created “a higher return on investment.” Chen et al. (2015) noted that servant leaders directly influenced frontline employee’s and increased performance, work quality, and citizenship behavior. Ye et al. (2020) tied leaders exhibiting humility to influence followers to also be humble, which Li et al. (2019) tied to improved employee engagement and followers feeling encouraged to share their ideas. Servant leaders have also been noted to increase follower motivation (Smith, 2003), as well as task performance, productivity (Wang et al., 2018b), creativity (Hu et al., 2017), and effectiveness (Owens & Hekman, 2016). Finally, Chen et al. (2015) identified that leaders who practiced service before self were those who prioritized the safety and well-being of others; increasing follower morale, mission effectiveness, performance, work quality, and citizenship behavior. These references tied together some of the influence themes in the data analysis.

Servant leaders helped increase the efficiency and effectiveness of followers, teams, and the entire squadron; participant A noted the adage TEAM: Together Everyone Achieves More, which was also mentioned by Sipe & Frick (2015) who tied it to compassionate collaboration when leaders showed appreciation for follower inputs and

an ability to negotiate conflict. Servant leader commanders ultimately increased the performance of those around them and created positive organizational outcomes achieving identified goals. Participants A, D, F and G stated that servant leaders created positive outcomes and helped achieve goals for all. Participants A, B and D said servant leaders increased effectiveness, while participant E stated they increased efficiency. Participants E and G stated servant leaders increased productivity, and participant H said they increased performance. All participants noted these influences are across all levels of the squadron and simply with a bigger impact as the size grows from individual to a team and to the entire organization.

Theme 4: The servant leader helped grow followers and teams in their current capacity, while developing future servant leaders

All participants stated that servant leader squadron commanders focused on mentoring followers and that they influenced members to develop into future servant leaders. Participants A, C, D, E and F said servant leaders grew followers at all levels and developed them to be their best. Participant D mentioned specifically that servant leader squadron commanders grew junior enlisted members and that this mentorship was both with regard to personal and professional items. Participant C stated that servant leaders had a focus for all members in the squadron to “train your replacement.”

Theme 5: The servant leader made followers and teams feel empowered to lead their respective responsibilities

The increased trust between the leader and follower, as a result of servant leadership characteristics, allowed the confidence to empower subordinates. Participants A and B tied these two together, stating that the commander allowed for decision-making

at the lowest level and allowed for an acceptable level of risk. Participant B also tied this back to a commander's vision and intent, which helped drive decisive action from followers. Participants A, B, C, D, E, F and G all said that a servant leader squadron commander made followers feel empowered.

Theme 6: The servant leader helped the organization navigate continuous technology and manpower changes

Lastly, participants noted that servant leaders knew how to navigate organizational change. Participants A, B, E and F stated that servant leaders managed change easily, and created positive organizational change when moving forward and looking for areas to improve. Participant B also mentioned servant leaders "enabling change faster," and participant A said they prioritized "continuous process improvement (CPI), and used some form of the continuous improvement cycle." MITRE defined CPI as a four-step process part of quality management during development, while understanding agile development will be forever evolving and require this never-ending cycle (2021). Gen. Fogleman noted that servant leadership inspired trust, teamwork, and continuous improvement (Yolitz, 1997, p. 18).

This productive process for change is done through effective communication to ensure forward progress for followers and the various projects within the squadron. This communication also relays the overall vision for the organization to stay relevant, while also resolving conflict among personnel and teams. Kanter (2020) noted a people-first culture that prioritized listening to stakeholders creates an organization better able to overcome challenges and embrace change. Servant leaders take decisive action and then entrust followers to move out on those decisions. Participant E stated that servant leaders

listened to follower ideas and pushed for diversity of thought. Gen. Goldfein noted that servant leaders listened to input from every Airman, especially at the squadron level (Brissett, 2017).

For intelligence squadrons, the advancement in technology also related to enhanced analytical skills and the use of data mining programs. Participants B, C, E and F mentioned that servant leaders promoted innovation in a squadron, and participant A said a servant leader squadron commander “increased agility to speed up problem solving.” Participants D and E said that servant leaders helped increase critical thinking and analytical skills in followers. Participant G noted that servant leaders allowed for increased freedom of thought. Creativity and innovation were influences mentioned by participants but also in research tied to authentic leadership (Muceldili et al., 2013). Participant F noted, “innovation is vital to intelligence processions with the vast amount of data and figuring how to make sense of it all.” Advancements in technology with Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning will be critical to the future success of intelligence squadrons.

Summary of Servant Leader Influences

The data analysis showed that servant leader squadron commanders increased trust, positivity, team cohesion, motivation, and that followers felt cared for and valued within a team and the unit. Servant leader squadron commanders also created a positive culture within the organization and positively influenced followers at all levels, which ultimately increased morale. While servant leaders influenced the development of followers into future servant leaders, it was noted that non-servant leaders also influenced followers to develop into future non-servant leaders. Overall, servant leader commanders

created a community within their squadron and increased buy-in by explaining to followers the impact of their daily actions. This sense of purpose increased job satisfaction and overall success of the unit. Additionally, intelligence squadrons are constantly looking at ways to improve their processes and advance their technology, which servant leaders increased innovation within an organization.

Alternate Comments

There were three situations noted by two participants when a leader may not want to exhibit servant leadership characteristics, but none were specific to a squadron commander's position. Additionally, both participants noted that in all professions there are situations where a leader must adjust how they handle tough decisions in order to yield desired results. Participant F noted that in combat, or other situations where safety is priority, there are times when a leader must give direct orders and treat followers with a more transactional approach than the previously mentioned servant leader characteristics. However, participant F also noted that this action would be a leader "caring for others" in a way to protect them from harm. This also would be skillful communication by relaying direct orders to followers for action, while understanding the level of threat posed to all members.

Participants C and E noted that lower level leaders, under the squadron commander, may need to use a more transactional approach with junior enlisted members to ensure tasks are completed. Sometimes this is in the form of accomplishing daily tasks with no errors and faster to allow the follower to leave early, take an extended lunch, or have physical fitness time each day. Participant C mentioned a Flight Commander – typically a Capt – saying, "just do the thing and you can have XYZ." Finally, participant

B mentioned some commanders who focused too much on servant leadership, “prioritizing follower happiness over getting the mission done.” There must be a balance and using leadership characteristics across a spectrum, adjusting actions based on different situations.

Analysis and Synthesis of Findings

The findings related to USAF intelligence squadron commanders supported previous research on the characteristics and influences of servant leaders. All participants mentioned codes that tied to characteristics from the literature review – *integrity, people first, skillful communication, awareness of self and others, compassionate collaboration, empowering followers, foresight and building community, systems thinking, and moral authority and courage*. One note is that all followers saw integrity, character, and moral courage as requirements to be any type of squadron commander and that these characteristics would also be expected of non-servant leader squadron commanders.

For servant leadership characteristics, the participants noted that their servant leaders prioritized what would benefit followers and the squadron over what would benefit their career, as a commander and with higher future aspirations. Many of the codes were also relevant to authentic leadership and participants mentioned that their servant leaders were authentic and genuine when showing care for others, supported by a strong awareness of themselves and others. Servant leader commanders empowered followers and allowed an acceptable level of risk, protecting them from any senior leader scrutiny as they *failed toward success* (Brown, 2021). This allowance of risk taking increased innovation within the units and enabled development of advanced processes and technologies. All of these positives were reinforced by skillful communication and

commanders who were transparent in talking to followers, while also exercising active listening skills to better understand all members in the squadron.

For the influences of a servant leader squadron commander, participants noted increased trust, positivity, team cohesion, motivation, and followers feeling cared for and valued. This was mentioned across all levels from the follower to a team and the squadron as a whole. Servant leaders were seen to have created a positive culture and community for followers to feel welcome. This enhanced buy-in and unit members who understood their purpose in supporting organizational goals aligned to the commander's vision. Servant leaders mentored and grew followers in both a personal and professional manner, developing them into future leaders. The empowerment felt by followers gave them the freedom of thought to tackle hard problems and create innovative solutions. The USAF is constantly going through change and servant leaders have helped alleviate the pain such changes can cause followers.

Summary

It is important to note that this research was specific to squadron commanders in the rank of Lt Col and aimed to provide recommended servant leadership characteristics for all leaders, but did not look at leaders across other levels of command or supervision. This research was also specific to USAF intelligence squadrons, which may not reflect the most effective leadership characteristics for a squadron commander of a different career-field. All participants were SMSgt intelligence professionals, which helped keep the study specific given the phenomenological design. Ultimately, followers wanted a squadron commander who put people first and showed care for others, which should be a given considering the USAF core value of *service before self*. All participants noted that

servant leadership was and is best for a squadron commander, especially for USAF intelligence squadron commanders.

FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The researcher believes this study to be important because USAF senior leaders in recent years continue to preach servant leadership and values based leadership. Gen. Goldfein stated that all USAF personnel must be servant leaders and it is a duty to followers, moving forward on a *people first* journey in order to motivate followers to fully *join* the institution and live out the values of *integrity* and *service before self* (2019b). This research is important because not all leaders exhibit the characteristics of servant leadership, and the participants in this study noted that half of their previous squadron commanders were not following the direction from Gen. Goldfein to put people first. Additionally, they noted that not all officers prioritize the leader-follower relationship that Gen. Goldfein describes as vital to the health of a squadron (2001).

The participants did note that they have seen more servant leader USAF intelligence squadron commanders in recent years, which is promising and this research could help codify the reasons for a leader to exhibit such characteristics. The influences of a servant leader squadron commander should be enough to convince anyone to want to follow in Gen. Goldfein's footsteps. Squadron commanders have a significant impact on followers and what type of future leader they will develop into. This study focused on the follower perception in order to explore the lived experiences of followers. The study's focus on the follower perspective is important because Carsten (2016) noted that thousands of leadership publications forget about follower actions and responses when mentioning leadership characteristics. This research could be used in professional military education (PME) or at all levels of leadership to teach various lessons on the

importance of servant leadership characteristics. The study's aim will be addressed by a proposed solution, which centers around continuing to increase the USAF focus on servant leadership and ensure squadron commanders are mirroring what senior General Officers are prescribing them to do.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to examine the lived experiences of USAF intelligence senior enlisted leaders (SELs) – in the ranks of E-8 Senior Master Sergeant (SMSgt) – as followers of USAF intelligence squadron commanders who exhibited servant leadership characteristics. This study specifically looked at servant leadership characteristics as identified in the literature and supported by Jesuit and USAF values-based teachings, as well as characteristics and influences identified by participants that were specific to their lived experiences.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this dissertation in practice (DIP) was to highlight the influence of servant leadership characteristics exhibited by USAF intelligence squadron commanders on followers, teams, and organizational outcomes of the squadron and provide a framework of recommended servant leadership practices for intelligence officers to use in leadership roles, notably squadron command. An additional aim of this study was to publish research that could be used in PME to develop future military leaders who understand the value of servant leadership, as well as in unofficial leadership sessions held by officer and enlisted leaders within a squadron or other organizations.

Talent management is a priority for Air Force senior leaders, attempting to increase flexibility and transparency for personnel placement and taking input from

commanders (Bailey, 2019). In order for commanders to honestly manage the talent of their followers, they must understand each and every one of them as a person. If talent management is truly a priority, then it is the role of commanders to develop future leaders in a profession of constant change. This research study focused on the influence of servant leaders on the lives of followers, notably the perceptions of SELs with many lived experiences to share with their participation.

Proposed Solution

Given the positive results of this study, the proposed solution is that USAF intelligence squadron commanders prescribe to the philosophy of servant leadership. Additionally, the information in this DIP could be used in PME. However, PME is not an iterative process and there should be training courses for leaders at all levels to create deliberate development every year or multiple times a year. With the advent of virtual education and increased use in 2020, these courses could be easily accessible and tracked by the member's supervisor. Air Combat Command (ACC) initiated a virtual learning space for Bridge Chats, <https://www.acc.af.mil/About-Us/The-Bridge/BRIDGE-CHATS/>, which are directed for teams within ACC to conduct on a monthly basis with new topics, videos, and questions. Recent chats were focused around resiliency due to the pandemic, and using historical war stories to discuss courage during times of adversity. Each month has a theme, which could allow either additional discussions specific to characteristics and influences of servant leadership or as part of the Bridge Chats. This would be up to ACC leadership. Using the learning leadership website, senior leaders could post their favorite books on different leadership topics and potentially sponsor some Airmen by providing free copies of books. As a precursor to both of these ideas,

appendix I shows a summary of the research findings from this study and aims to be used as a cheat sheet for intelligence officers at all levels, as most aspire to be a squadron commander eventually.

While the study was specific to intelligence squadrons, the concepts can be used in a variety of workplaces. The researcher understands that some situations and some units require non-servant leader characteristics to achieve their goals. Commanders are not all created equal and some have different strengths and weaknesses. A leader should understand what they succeed at and this can be done through taking a strengths finder survey. Leaders should amplify their strengths and seek out support from peers or first-level followers on their weaknesses, which is how a true leader builds a successful team. Finally, CSAF and other senior leaders post a reading list online for USAF members to review, <https://www.af.mil/About-Us/CSAF-Leadership-Library/>, and there is a learning professionals website with similar content, <https://www.learningprofessionals.af.mil/>. These could be avenues to have sections for different leadership types that current USAF senior leaders believe should be embodied by the force. The website has TED Talks but none on servant leadership.

Support for the Solution

Overall, the data from this study leads me to believe that servant leadership should be used by more leaders in the USAF and the participants identify a lengthy list of positive influences of such leaders. The USAF is prioritizing Talent Management with how members are vectored to positions to create the best fit, so such an educational solution to developing leaders should also be a priority for USAF senior leaders. The

research highlighted these servant leadership characteristics exhibited by USAF intelligence squadron commanders in the lived experiences of participants:

- *integrity*: character, mutual trust
- *people first*: service before self, stewardship, humility, care for others
- *skillful communication*: empathy, listening, honesty, welcomes feedback
- *awareness of self and others*: authenticity, emotional intelligence
- *compassionate and collaboration*: team mentality
- *empowering followers*: develop followers and future leaders, accept risk
- *systems thinking*: strategic thought, provide vision, teach followers
- *moral authority and moral courage*: set the standard, lead by example

As a result of these characteristics, participants noted the many positive influences that a servant leader squadron commander has on followers, teams, and organizations.

These influences support the reasoning for USAF intelligence squadron commanders, and potentially all commanders and leaders at all levels, to follow this leadership philosophy.

These are the influences mentioned by participants:

- *positive culture*: increased motivation/morale, feel valued, increased trust
- *building community*: all welcome, all invested, develop relationships
- *increased success*: productivity, efficiency, effectiveness, quality
- *understand purpose*: increased buy-in, common goals, job satisfaction
- *feel empowered*: increased team cohesion, “fail forward”
- *foresight*: innovation, adaptive to change, return on investment, CPI
- *develop future leaders*: create more servant leaders, train replacements

This information supports the solution to add servant leadership education to ACC's website and direct teams to discuss different aspects of servant leadership characteristics and influences on a monthly basis. Additionally, a section could be added to the CSAF reading list that is specific to servant leadership publications that he and other USAF senior leaders want the force to read.

Implementation of the Proposed Solution

Factors and Stakeholders Related to Implementing the Solution

All members of the USAF are stakeholders in their squadron and the institution as a whole, but they need to feel that way which is the responsibility of first-line supervisors and commanders. Servant leadership proves especially important for intelligence squadrons due to the heightened focus on technology advancements and critical thinking for analysis in order to advise commanders and senior leader decisions. Every member of the USAF is a leader in some capacity. Supervisors and commanders should enhance this feeling for their followers, leveraging leadership education to have mentorship discussions and understand the individual's goals. The data from this study can be used by USAF leaders to have these discussions. The researcher has also seen some servant leaders and some non-servant leaders in his career, which leads him to believe that the solution from this study would have positive impacts at all levels of the USAF. The researcher is also an intelligence officer and he believes servant leadership is vital to the success of intelligence squadrons.

Policies/Barriers Influencing the Proposed Solution

There are no policies that would inhibit the proposed solution but it would require senior leader buy-in. This would likely have to route through the researcher's chain of

command or leverage contacts at higher headquarters (HQ) locations with an executive summary of this DIP and recommended solution. Notably, this should reach ACC leadership but could come from top down by Secretary of the Air Force and CSAF down to all Major Commands (MAJCOM). The fact websites already exist to host such content means this could be easily implemented, but if directed by General Officers then it should be in-line with their own leadership philosophies and objectives. There are no financial obstacles to this solution but monthly team discussions would take time away from the primary duties of USAF personnel. However, they would be conducting professional development and that is a priority for CSAF and should be a priority for all USAF leaders, especially squadron commanders.

Building Support for the Proposed Solution

The complete solution will require 4-star General buy-in but dissemination of this DIP vertically and laterally could have a more real impact of individuals understanding these results to then discuss them in their leader-follower relationships. The ultimate goal is leaders at all levels discussing information in this DIP. This will reach the most people if supported by senior leaders and developed into a curriculum for monthly team discussions and tied to servant leadership publications supported by the CSAF, using appendix I as a baseline to build lessons from.

External Implications for the Organization

This DIP was specific to the lived experiences of eight USAF intelligence SMSgts so the scope is small but the data is relevant across many ranks and other career-fields and USAF organizations. Additionally, the information in this DIP could be used by other joint military services, civilian corporations, academic institutions, and any

organization or group of people who find value in servant leadership characteristics and want their team to have the positive influences identified.

Evaluation and Timeline for Implementation

This solution could be implemented with a short timeline but would require evaluation from senior USAF leaders and determine what MAJCOMs it would be most relevant to use. Implementation for the CSAF reading list additions should be updated annually, and this could also identify books MAJCOM commanders say are most relevant. Implementation for the monthly team discussions could follow the same format as the current ACC Bridge Chats and squadron commanders would have to buy-in so their personnel are given the time to conduct the sessions.

Implications

Practical Implications

The researcher believes that everyone who is able to read this study will learn from it and gain knowledge on what servant leadership characteristics followers want in a leader, and the positive influences they can have on all levels of an organization. Specifically, this study should benefit USAF intelligence professionals. While the data is specific to the SMSgt perspective of intelligence squadron commanders, the leader-follower relationship at all levels and across all organizations can benefit from this study.

Implications for Leadership Theory and Practice

Leadership is interactive and it is the leader-follower relationship that determines success of an organization. Gen. Fogleman noted that USAF leaders must inspire trust, teamwork, and continuous improvement (Yolitz, 1997, p. 18). The USAF officer promotion system should focus less on individual performance and more on critical

thinkers and leadership abilities (Bethel et al., 2010). Stark (2018) understands that it is easier to measure 12 indicators, but none of them relate to leadership potential or adherence to USAF core values. Squadron commanders must prioritize what is best for their followers and the organization, if they hope to have a positive impact and be seen as a leader and not a careerist. Gen. Goldfein understood that as a squadron commander he must represent his people, for they have contributed more than he ever did (2001, p. 17). The SNCO perspective of the commander is critical to understanding the health of a squadron, which Col Mark Brown mentioned the need to leverage the SNCOs to develop buy-in for his vision to permeate throughout all levels. Follower buy-in leads to USAF personnel truly *joining* the institution versus simply being in it.

Implications for Future Research

Additional research on servant leadership in USAF organizations is warranted. A larger study could be conducted to cover all intelligence squadrons, which quantitative data may be relevant now having a baseline from the qualitative phenomenological research. Alternatively, a study that includes multiple different career-fields could help understand if there are preferred leadership characteristics executing different types of jobs. As noted by a few participants, there are sometimes situations that require non-servant leader characteristics in order to accomplish an immediate task or ensure safety of peoples' lives. This would be warranted since the USAF has similar career paths to squadron command and higher leadership positions for officers and there should be a standard leadership spectrum for them to look at when leading in different situations. Finally, a comparative study could be conducted to understand the influences of toxic leadership compared to servant leadership. This study did not ask any questions outside

of servant leadership but some participants mentioned negative influences from commanders who exhibited characteristics not in-line with servant leadership.

Summary of the Dissertation in Practice

This DIP was a qualitative phenomenological study on the lived experiences of USAF intelligence E-8 SMSgts working under servant leader intelligence squadron commanders. Eight participants were interviewed with structured open-ended questions to allow for them to provide stories and their own perspective. Coding and analysis of the transcribed interviews resulted in the identification of six themes related to USAF intelligence squadron commander servant leadership characteristics and six themes related to the influences of these commanders. The results of this study were as expected from examining previous research in the literature review. Followers want a squadron commander who puts people first and shows care for others, representing the USAF core values of *integrity first* and *service before self*. All participants state that servant leadership is best for a USAF intelligence squadron commander.

The servant leadership characteristics are: (1) prioritizing what benefits followers and the organization over what benefits the leader, (2) authentic care for others with self-awareness and awareness of others, (3) empower followers and provide top cover to allow risk taking and failure as part of the path towards success and innovation, (4) skillful communication with active listening and transparency with followers, (5) compassion and prioritization of collaboration amongst teams in the squadron and with external organizations, (6) morale courage, integrity, and character by leading by example. The servant leadership influences are: (1) create a culture where followers feel valued and cared for as part of a community, (2) increase buy-in by creating followers

and teams who want to follow the commander due to increased trust and followers understanding the impact and “why” of their work, (3) increase follower, team, and organizational success, (4) help grow followers and teams in their current capacity in order to develop future servant leaders, (5) make followers and teams feel empowered to lead their respective responsibilities, (6) help the organization navigate continuous technology and manpower changes.

The proposed solution from this study is to provide this DIP for use in PME, but it would be more effective to use servant leadership teachings in more regular professional development. This could be done through training courses and material hosted on USAF and ACC websites, as well as direction from senior leaders to conduct monthly discussions on this topic in the same manner that Bridge Chats are directed for ACC units. This would create more deliberate development of USAF personnel to represent the leadership characteristics desired by CSAF’s over the years and many other USAF senior leaders. This would be best implemented if there was General Officer support, but could still have significant impacts if disseminated horizontally and vertically from the researcher.

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Appendix A

Bill of Rights for Research Participants

As a participant in a research study, you have the right:

1. To have enough time to decide whether or not to be in the research study, and to make that decision without any pressure from the people who are conducting the research.
2. To refuse to be in the study at all, or to stop participating at any time after you begin the study.
3. To be told what the study is trying to find out, what will happen to you, and what you will be asked to do if you are in the study.
4. To be told about the reasonably foreseeable risks of being in the study.
5. To be told about the possible benefits of being in the study.
6. To be told whether there are any costs associated with being in the study and whether you will be compensated for participating in the study.
7. To be told who will have access to information collected about you and how your confidentiality will be protected.
8. To be told whom to contact with questions about the research, about research-related injury, and about your rights as a research participant.
9. If the study involves treatment or therapy:
 - a. To be told about the other non-research treatment choices you have.
 - b. To be told where treatment is available should you have a research-related injury, and who will pay for research-related treatment.

Appendix B

Participant Information Letter

Information Letter

Servant Leadership Influences Research

IRB project number 2001502

Principal Investigator: William Kelley, Creighton University ILD Student

Principal Investigators' Contact: 574-210-3282, williamkelley@creighton.edu

Research Mentor: Dr. Robert Koonce, Creighton University ILD Professor,
robkoonce@creighton.edu

DATE: 3 March 2021

Dear Participant,

Welcome! Thank you for your interest and participation in this important research study. All USAF intelligence professionals respond differently to the variety of leadership characteristics exhibited by USAF intelligence squadron commanders. This means that there may be different influences noted by followers as a result of a USAF intelligence squadron commander who exhibits characteristics of servant leadership. You have been chosen to participate in this research because you are an intelligence senior enlisted leader (SEL) in the rank of E-8.

Your participation is voluntary and your decision to complete or not complete these questions will in no way affect your military status, as participation or lack of participation will only be visible to the researcher and not shared with anyone else. By understanding this information, your consent to participate will be acknowledged verbally. At any point, you are free to decide to stop participation in the study.

This portion of the research will help you describe your understanding of servant leadership and your perception of USAF intelligence squadron commanders you have worked for in the past. Please answer all of the questions as they relate to your lived experiences in the USAF, but exclude information relating to your current commander. This information will be used to determine participants to be interviewed at a later date. This document has all information related to the study.

Study Purpose and Procedures

- The purpose of this study is to identify the influence that USAF intelligence squadron commanders have on followers, highlighting common thoughts, feelings, and experiences from you and your peer volunteers.
- Participation is planned for 10 minutes for the initial screening questions and 30-45 minute interviews using Zoom, all completed during personal off-duty time with a personal computer.

- Following the interview, you will receive the transcript to confirm correctness and add or clarify information prior to it being finalized and run through NVivo for coding as part of data analysis.

Benefits of Participating in the Study

- There is no direct benefit to participating in this study but participants will have an ability to provide information relating to lived experiences of working for a servant leader squadron commander and highlight the influence it had on individuals, teams, and entire squadron.
- There is a potential benefit to society and the USAF if this research is published.

Risks of Participating in the Study

- There are no more risks expected than is encountered in everyday life.
- Participation will have no impact on your relationship with the military.
- A possible risk involved in this study is the potential social and psychological risks associated with accidental disclosure of confidential information from the data collected throughout the study. Methods of storing and securing data are designed to minimize this risk.

Confidentiality

We will do everything we can to keep your records confidential. However, it cannot be guaranteed. We may need to report certain information to agencies as required by law. The questions in this research protocol are not expected to elicit any responses that would require such reporting. The records we collect identifying you as a participant will be maintained and stored for 3 years on a password protected laptop and in an encrypted folder.

Records that identify you, such as a list of participant emails, may be looked at by others. However, consent will be given verbally so there are no documents listing participant names in connection with the written and verbal question responses. The list of people who may look at your research records are:

- The investigator and his mentor
- The Creighton University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and other internal departments that provide support and oversight at Creighton University

We may present the research findings at professional meetings or publish the results of this research study in relevant journals. However, we will always keep your name and other identifying information private, as the point of this research is to keep participant responses anonymous.

Disclosure of Appropriate Alternatives

- Another alternative would be to choose not to participate.
- Choosing to not participate will have no impact on your military standing or current position.

Compensation for Participation

- Participants will not be compensated in this study.

Contact Information

- Please contact Dr. Robert Koonce with any concerns, robkoonce@creighton.edu
- For questions about research participant rights, review the bill of rights or contact the Institutional Review Board at 402-280-2126.

Sincerely,

William Kelley, Creighton University, Interdisciplinary Leadership Doctorate
Candidate

574-210-3282, williamkelley@creighton.edu

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Date:

Interviewee Number:

I would like to thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this research study investigating what are the influences of servant leader USAF intelligence squadron commanders on followers now working as senior enlisted leaders in the ranks of E-8. The interview will focus on both the characteristics of servant leadership and the influences identified by participants as it relates to the lived experiences in the USAF, which will be compared and contrasted to previous research both related and unrelated to servant leadership. The purpose of this research is to develop a better understanding of these influences and to provide a framework of servant leadership characteristics that are in-line with USAF organizational priorities. I would like to remind you that any information collected for the study such as your comments and any observations made will remain anonymous. I would ask that you provide verbal consent before we start. There will be no signed consent form in order to minimize the amount of participant identifiable information. If you feel the need to stop, take a break or clarify anything, please feel free to do so. If you have any further questions or concerns at any point you may contact me, 574-210-3282 or williamkelley@creighton.edu.

This research aims to better understand how USAF intelligence squadron commanders who exhibit servant leadership characteristics may influence followers with regard to the individual, teams, and entire squadrons as organizations. The focus of this research will be the perception of enlisted followers now serving in leadership roles.

Demographic Questions:

1. How many personnel are in your squadron? _____
2. Please indicate your age range:
 - (a.) 26-30
 - (b.) 31-35
 - (c.) 36-40
 - (d.) 41-45
 - (e.) 45+
3. Please indicate your rank: _____
4. How many years have you served in the USAF?
 - (f.) 11-14
 - (g.) 15-18
 - (h.) 19-22
 - (i.) 22-25
 - (j.) 26+
5. Please indicate whether you are male or female _____

Reference the servant leadership characteristics list from the call for participants, regarding the following interview questions.

1. Can you share with me, in your own words, what your perception is of servant leadership?
2. In thinking back on your lived experiences, do you believe the squadron commanders you have worked for prioritized servant leadership the same way that top Generals and Senior Enlisted Leaders (SEL) have and do now?
3. In your words, what are the main characteristics of a servant leader?
4. During your career, what are some of the servant leadership characteristics that you have seen exhibited by USAF intelligence squadron commanders?
5. Have you ever read any publications on servant leadership?
6. Describe some of the ways that servant leadership influences:
 - a. Followers
 - b. Teams
 - c. Organizations

7. How do servant leadership characteristics positively influence an individual follower?
8. How do servant leadership characteristics positively influence a team?
9. How do servant leadership characteristics positively influence organizational outcomes?
10. Do you believe servant leadership is important for USAF intelligence squadron commanders? Are there other leadership philosophies that you believe may be more important in leading a squadron?
11. Do you think that servant leader USAF intelligence squadron commanders influence lower level leaders in their squadrons to be servant leaders?
12. Is there anything else you would like to add that has not been asked?

Appendix D

Questionnaire for Population of Interest to Recruit Sample Size

Lived Experiences of Servant Leadership Questionnaire**Screening Questions:**

1. Are you currently an intelligence SNCO in the rank of E-8 serving in the Department of the U.S. Air Force?
 - (a.) Yes
 - (b.) No

2. Not including your current commander, how many USAF intelligence squadron commanders for whom you have previously worked have exhibited any of the servant leadership characteristics described?
 - (a.) 0
 - (b.) 1
 - (c.) 2
 - (d.) 3
 - (e.) 4 or more

3. Please describe in your own words some servant leadership characteristics you have experienced.

This is the end of the initial questionnaire. Thank you. If you answered A to question 2 then you are complete. All others please complete the following survey.

*Appendix E*Servant Leadership Survey (SLS) with Commander Mentioned for Participants
(van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011)

1. My manager [commander] gives me the information I need to do my work well.
2. My manager [commander] encourages me to use my talents.
3. My manager [commander] helps me to further develop myself
4. My manager [commander] encourages his/her staff to come up with new ideas.
5. My manager [commander] keeps himself/herself in the background and gives credits to others.
6. My manager [commander] holds me responsible for the work I carry out.
7. My manager [commander] keeps criticizing people for the mistakes they have made in their work (r).
8. My manager [commander] takes risks even when he/she is not certain of the support from his/her own manager.
9. My manager [commander] is open about his/her limitations and weaknesses.
10. My manager [commander] learns from criticism.
11. My manager [commander] emphasizes the importance of focusing on the good of the whole.
12. My manager [commander] gives me the authority to take decisions which make work easier for me.
13. My manager [commander] is not chasing recognition or rewards for the things he/she does for others.
14. I am held accountable for my performance by my manager [commander].
15. My manager [commander] maintains a hard attitude towards people who have offended him/her at work (r).
16. My manager [commander] takes risks and does what needs to be done in his/her view.

17. My manager [commander] is often touched by the things he/she sees.
18. My manager [commander] tries to learn from the criticism he/she gets from his/her superior.
19. My manager [commander] has a long-term vision
20. My manager [commander] enables me to solve problems myself instead of just telling me what to do.
21. My manager [commander] appears to enjoy his/her colleagues' success more than his/her own.
22. My manager [commander] holds me and my colleagues responsible for the way we handle a job.
23. My manager [commander] finds it difficult to forget things that went wrong in the past (r).
24. My manager [commander] is prepared to express his/her feelings even if this might have undesirable consequences.
25. My manager [commander] admits his/her mistakes to his/her superiors.
26. My manager [commander] emphasizes the societal responsibility of our work.
27. My manager [commander] offers me abundant opportunities to learn new skills.
28. My manager [commander] shows his/her true feelings to his/her staff.
29. My manager [commander] learns from the different views and opinions of others.
30. If people express criticism, my manager [commander] tries to learn from it.

Appendix F

Call for Participants

Doctoral Student Looking for Volunteers to Participate in Servant Leadership Research

This research will complete an investigation of servant leadership characteristics among USAF intelligence squadron commanders. Scholarly publications indicate that servant leadership may positively impact followers and organizations (Carter & Baghurst, 2014; Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018; Nichols & Cottrell, 2014). Squadron commanders tend to have an influence on followers and their career development, impacting how they act as individuals, members of a team, members of a squadron, and as future leaders.

I am investigating the follower perception of these servant leadership characteristics and the influences, through the lens of current intelligence senior enlisted leaders in the rank of E-8 reflecting on their career of lived experiences. I am looking for volunteers to participate in one-on-one virtual interviews, during off-duty time and through personal communication methods. The intention is to help USAF personnel and academic researchers understand servant leadership through published research, and potentially be included in professional military education (PME) courses. The total number of participants will be determined when saturation is reached.

For the purpose of this study, servant leadership characteristics are defined as:

- *integrity*: accountability, character, behaving ethically
- *people first*: service before self, stewardship, humility
- *skillful communication*: empathy, listening, welcomes feedback
- *awareness of self and others*: including authenticity
- *compassionate collaboration*: including persuasion

- *empowering followers*: developing careers and future leaders
- *foresight and building community*: leadership versus management
- *system thinking*: conceptualization and teaching/coaching followers
- *moral authority and moral courage*: command authority

If you are interested in volunteering for this research, please contact William Kelley at williamkelley@creighton.edu. Your name will not be used in the data collection or reporting for this research. See attached information letter with bill of rights. Participant information will remain confidential and responses will remain anonymous. The intent is to complete the interviews during TBD (once DoD and IRB approval is given). Thank you in advance for your interest in becoming a voice for USAF servant leadership.

Appendix G

Servant Leadership Survey (SLS) Ordered by Characteristic

Empowerment

1. My manager gives me the information I need to do my work well.
2. My manager encourages me to use my talents.
3. My manager helps me to further develop myself
4. My manager encourages his/her staff to come up with new ideas.
12. My manager gives me the authority to take decisions which make work easier for me.
20. My manager enables me to solve problems myself instead of just telling me what to do.
27. My manager offers me abundant opportunities to learn new skills.

Standing Back

5. My manager keeps himself/herself in the background and gives credits to others.
13. My manager is not chasing recognition or rewards for the things he/she does for others.
21. My manager appears to enjoy his/her colleagues' success more than his/her own.

Accountability

6. My manager holds me responsible for the work I carry out.
14. I am held accountable for my performance by my manager.
22. My manager holds me and my colleagues responsible for the way we handle a job.

Forgiveness

7. My manager keeps criticizing people for the mistakes they have made in their work (r).

15. My manager maintains a hard attitude towards people who have offended him/her at work (r).

23. My manager finds it difficult to forget things that went wrong in the past (r).

Courage

8. My manager takes risks even when he/she is not certain of the support from his/her own manager.

16. My manager takes risks and does what needs to be done in his/her view.

Authenticity

9. My manager is open about his/her limitations and weaknesses.

17. My manager is often touched by the things he/she sees.

24. My manager is prepared to express his/her feelings even if this might have undesirable consequences.

28. My manager shows his/her true feelings to his/her staff.

Humility

10. My manager learns from criticism.

18. My manager tries to learn from the criticism he/she gets from his/her superior.

25. My manager admits his/her mistakes to his/her superiors.

29. My manager learns from the different views and opinions of others.

30. If people express criticism, my manager tries to learn from it.

Stewardship

11. My manager emphasizes the importance of focusing on the good of the whole.

19. My manager has a long-term vision

26. My manager emphasizes the societal responsibility of our work.

Appendix H

Creighton IRB Approval



DATE: 30-Nov-2020
TO: Kelley, William
FROM: Social / Behavioral
PROJECT TITLE: Servant Leadership Influences
REFERENCE #: 2001502-01
SUBMISSION TYPE: Initial Application
ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: 30-Nov-2020
EXPIRATION DATE: 11-Nov-2021
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited

Thank you for your submission of Response to IRB Requests materials for this project. The following items have been reviewed with this submission:

- DoD Approval~
- Creighton University HS eForm~

You have satisfied the concerns of the Board as expressed in the letter dated 30-Nov-2020 from the IRB. Therefore, this project is fully approved. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Command approval was uploaded within the submission, therefore this project is fully approved by the Creighton IRB.

The consent documentation has been waived as, per 45 CFR 46.117, this research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context.

- Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

- Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.
- All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others (UPIRSOs) and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.
- All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.
- If this project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk (risks no greater than one would encounter in daily life) project it will require continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. The Annual/Continuing Review/Project Termination form must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at 402-2802126 or irb@creighton.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

Appendix I

Servant Leadership Research Findings

<u>CHARACTERISTICS</u>	<u>INFLUENCES</u>
<p><i>people first</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - service before self, stewardship - humility, care for others <p><i>skillful communication</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - empathy, listening, honesty - welcomes feedback <p><i>awareness of self/others</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - emotional intelligence - authenticity <p><i>integrity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - character - mutual trust <p><i>empower followers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - accept risk - develop future leaders <p><i>compassionate collaboration</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - team mentality <p><i>systems thinking</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strategic thought - provide vision, teach followers <p><i>moral authority, moral courage</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - set the standard, lead by example 	<p><i>positive culture</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increased motivation/morale - feel valued, increased trust <p><i>building community</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - all welcome, all invested - develop relationships <p><i>increased success</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - productivity, efficiency - effectiveness, quality <p><i>understand purpose</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increased buy-in <p>- common goals, job satisfaction</p> <p><i>feel empowered</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increased team cohesion - "fail forward" <p><i>foresight</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - innovation, adaptive to change - return on investment - continuous improvement <p><i>develop future leaders</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - create more servant leaders - train replacements

