



Cultivating Dialogue: A Central Imperative for the Study and Practice of Servant Leadership

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Abstract

This essay provides a point of entry into the exploration of dialogue and dialogic skills within the context of servant leadership. Contemporary leadership education can provide students with a dual education - one that teaches students about the value of servant leadership and one that equips students with the skills and competencies necessary for being a servant leader. An understanding of, and experience, with dialogue is critical to the enactment of servant leadership. This essay presents a conceptual framework for integrating dialogue and servant leadership, which highlights these four intersecting themes: dialogue as a competency for achieving servant leadership, dialogue as a potential solution to societal injustice, dialogue as a primary value for servant leadership, and dialogue as constitutive of servant leadership itself. These intersecting themes help to position dialogue as a central imperative for the study and practice of servant leadership.

Keywords: Servant Leadership, Cultivating Dialogue, Dialogic Skills

Meaningful and authentic dialogue is an essential competency for effective servant leadership. Amidst the recent protests about racial profiling, policing, and violence erupting in Ferguson, MO, Long Island, NY, Baltimore, MD, and other places across the

country, cultivating dialogic skills necessary to engage in difficult conversations about these topics is essential. College campuses are particularly well suited as institutions of higher education to teach students the skills necessary to engage in challenging dialogues, in general, but also now, and during other times when national social issues demand talking through conflict. In order to gain a more holistic understanding of the challenges that face our nation and its citizens, we must be willing to engage in dialogue with one another. This challenge of college aged students communicating with one another is highlighted within the literature about millennials – a generation also known as “digital natives” for their technological sophistication (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Prensky, 2001; Tapscott, 2009). Despite their perceived comfort with technology, millennials are sometimes criticized for their inability or unwillingness to engage in meaningful in-person conversation. As educators work to develop future leaders at their respective institutions, so too must they focus on the dialogic skills that constitute effective servant leadership. The relationship between dialogue and servant leadership, as will be explored in this essay, is both intimate and complementary insofar as servant leadership is brought to life through dialogic communication.

Students who are servant leaders demonstrate a steadfast commitment to serving others. Within the context of this service, students are well positioned to engage in conversation and authentic deep dialogue with those they are serving. In fact, being in conversation and understanding the deeply held beliefs and cultural traditions of others allows students to serve more fully than if there was not conversation between the parties. Traditional notions of servant leadership posit that servant leadership begins with service to others and an authentic desire to enrich the lives of others (Greenleaf, 1977; Northouse, 2015). In servant leadership, leadership emerges as a byproduct of service (Greenleaf, 1977; Daft & Lengel, 2000). However, many college students tend to deviate from the selfless aspects of servant leadership, and tend to pursue leadership positions for their own self-interest, and as a way of boosting their resume and future employment prospects. This observation may align with other arguments related to an increased self-interest among millennial college students (Bourke & Mechler, 2010). In a society that tends to privilege positional leadership (leadership that is signified by title or influence) over the process of influencing and enriching the lives of those whom one leads (servant leadership) (Greenleaf, 1977), dialogue occupies an important role in the co-construction of leadership between leaders and followers. It seems likely that one’s desire to serve hinges upon one’s ability and willingness to engage in authentic dialogue.

This essay provides a point of entry into the exploration of dialogue and dialogic skills within the context of servant leadership. We offer that contemporary leadership education can provide students with a dual education - one that teaches students about the value of servant leadership and one that equips students with the skills and competencies necessary for being a servant leader. An understanding of, and experience with, dialogue is critical to the enactment of servant leadership. Society has the potential to benefit greatly from a more constructive application of both concepts. By focusing on the collaborative work of two offices at our university, the Office of Student Development and the Center for Multicultural Affairs, we intend to position dialogue as a central

imperative for servant leadership. This essay presents a conceptual framework for integrating dialogue and servant leadership – a framework that highlights these four intersecting concepts: dialogue as a competency for achieving servant leadership, dialogue as a potential solution to societal injustice, dialogue as a primary value for servant leadership, and dialogue as constitutive of servant leadership itself. These intersecting themes provide a point of entry into understanding the critical role of dialogue in the very doing – and being – of servant leadership.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership is often described as a paradox (Spears, 2002). Additional literature on servant leadership addresses the valuable connections between the two interdependent concepts of service and leadership (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2002). Based on his reading of Herman Hesse's (1956) *Journey to the East*, Greenleaf (1977) highlights Leo, the servant of the travelling group, as a paradigmatic example of servant leadership. Leo's presence sustains the group on their mythical journey. Service and leadership are best understood as two interdependent areas of inquiry. Reflecting on Leo's impact on the group, Greenleaf depicts an approach to leadership that "begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead" (p. 13). Servant leadership extends beyond the act of "doing" and reflects a specific way of "being" (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). Servant leadership, as exemplified by iconic leaders such as Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, and Mother Teresa, involves a deliberate focus on seeing the world from another's perspective in order to serve first, and lead second. Servant leadership is not limited to these historic figures; rather, any individual is able to demonstrate these leadership behaviors in spite of one's personal struggles, constraints, and limitations (Barnabas & Clifford, 2012; Hay and Hodgkinson, 2006). This outlook makes attainable the very concept of servant leadership.

Spears (2002) noted an impressive expansion of interest in the theory and practice of servant leadership, "a model that identifies serving others - including employees, customers, and community - as the number-one priority" (p. 4). Particularly in the context of systemic issues facing contemporary organizations, servant leadership continues to attract scholarly and applied attention. Some may argue that we have yet to resolve what Greenleaf (1977) described to be a "leadership crisis" (p. 77). Building upon past research, there has been a recent attempt to incorporate the principles of servant leadership into a myriad of contexts, including school leadership (Browning, 2014); intercollegiate athletics (Burton & Peachey, 2013) and organizational performance management (Duff, 2013). This essay draws upon the co-curricular contexts of university programs; however, the applications transcend higher education. The skills of dialogue and servant leadership are relevant to a wide variety of applied domains, such as government, non-profit, and for profit sectors.

Numerous researchers have attempted to delineate the characteristics associated with servant leadership. In his synthesis of Greenleaf’s writings on the topic, Spears (2002) identified the following characteristics as the primary elements of servant leadership: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. In addition to this list, recent approaches to operationalize servant leadership have led to the development of the following dimensions of servant leadership: voluntary subordination, authentic self, covenantal relationship, responsible morality, transcendental spirituality, and transforming influence (Sendjaya, Sarros, & Santora, 2008). Russell and Stone (2002) go on to classify nine “functional attributes” of servant leadership which “are the operative qualities, characteristics, and distinctive features belonging to leaders and observed through specific leader behaviors in the workplace” (p. 146): vision, honesty, integrity, trust, service, modeling, pioneering, appreciation of others, and empowerment. The authors also identify a list of accompanying characteristics, including communication, credibility, competence, stewardship, visibility, influence, persuasion, listening, encouragement, teaching, and delegation. Additional scholars address other attributes and antecedents of servant leadership, including trust (Joseph & Winston, 2005; Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010), values (Russell, 2000); morality (Graham, 1991), creativity and innovation (Yoshida, Sendjaya, Hirst, & Cooper, 2014); and spirituality (Fairholm, 1997; Palmer, 1998). Northouse (2015) and van Dierendonck (2011) present a comprehensive summary of additional characteristics associated with servant leadership in the table below.

Table 1: Servant Leadership Characteristics

Laub (1999)	Wong & Davey (2007)	Barbuto & Wheeler (2006)	Dennis & Bocarnea (2005)	van Dierendonck & Nuijten (2011)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing people • Sharing leadership • Displaying authenticity • Valuing people • Providing leadership • Building community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serving and developing others • Consulting and involving others • Humility and selflessness • Modeling integrity and authenticity • Inspiring and influencing others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Altruistic calling • Emotional healing • Persuasive mapping • Organizational stewardship • Wisdom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment • Trust • Humility • Agapao love • Vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment • Humility • Standing back • Authenticity • Forgiveness • Courage • Accountability • Stewardship

SOURCE: Adapted from Northouse (2015) and van Dierendonck (2011)

Although it may be indirectly associated with any number of the aforementioned characteristics, dialogue is notably missing as a primary characteristic or attribute associated with the study and practice of servant leadership. Dialogue cuts across a number of the current servant leadership competencies, but as we argue here, dialogue especially merits focused attention during this current historical moment that is “marked by social diversity and the absence of a compelling, consensually embraced metanarrative” (Arnett & Arneson, 1999, p. xii). This moment demands respect for multiple perspectives – a way of being that is realized through an understanding of and appreciation of dialogue with others. The following section offers a brief conceptualization of dialogue, specifically through the framework of intergroup dialogue.

Dialogue and Intergroup Dialogue

Dialogue is defined in a variety of different ways depending on the context. Using its basic definition, dialogue is a conversation between two or more people and is often used as a synonym for discussion. Bohm (1996) defines dialogue in more specific ways and ties it directly to the process of communication. Moving beyond the communication transaction, Bohm suggests that dialogue is about creating a shared meaning between people. As he offers, “two people are making something in common, i.e., creating something new together” (p. 3). As a result of making something new, a shared understanding results from dialogic interactions. Cuentas and Méndez (2013) extend our understanding of dialogue and present the following comprehensive definition:

Dialogue is a process of genuine interaction in which human beings listen deeply and respectfully to each other in a way that what they learn changes them. Each participant in a dialogue strives to incorporate the concerns of the other participants into their own perspective, even when they continue to disagree. No participant gives up his or her identity, but each recognizes the human value of the claims of the others and therefore acts differently towards others (p. 9).

These notions of dialogue, Bohm’s work in particular, are notable and have become the basis for other forms of dialogue including democratic dialogue (Cuentas and Méndez, 2013), deliberative dialogue (NCDD, 2015), and dialogue programs such as intergroup dialogue (Schoem, Hurtado, Sevig, Chesler, & Sumida, 2001). We will briefly introduce all three models below, but the primary focus will be on the third model, intergroup dialogue.

Cuentas and Méndez (2013) of the United Nations Development Program created a report to discuss the practical nature of democratic dialogue. In this report they state, “democratic dialogue refers to dialogue that respects and strengthens democratic institutions, seeking to transform conflictive relationships so as to prevent crises and violence and therefore, contribute to enhance democratic governance” (p. 10). Reflecting the process of mutual cooperation and teamwork, “the goal of democratic dialogue is not merely to exchange information, but rather to transform through dialogue” (p. 10). From

this definition we see that there is an expectation that dialogue will create action and change among those involved in the dialogue process.

The National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (NCDD) defines a number of dialogue-related terms. They state that dialogue is a process that can “bring many benefits to civic life – an orientation toward constructive communication, the dispelling of stereotypes, honesty in relaying ideas, and the intention to listen to and understand the other” (NCDD, 2015). NCDD describes deliberative dialogue as a related process that brings a different benefit, “the use of critical thinking and reasoned argument as a way for citizens to make decisions on public policy” (NCDD, 2015). In addition to mutual understanding and cohesive interpersonal relationships, deliberative dialogue has the potential to solve public problems, address societal policy issues, and connect those individual concerns with larger public concerns.

Intergroup Dialogue (IGD) differs from other forms of dialogue described above because it is an intentional model of small group dialogue that involves people across different social identities coming together to build a strong democracy (Schoem, et al., 2001). While other forms of dialogue create conversation between existing groups of people, intergroup dialogue specifically constructs dialogue groups such that equal (or close to equal) numbers of people who have privileged and marginalized identities are present within the same conversation. It is this deliberate construction of the group (as well as other specific techniques) that helps to balance the power dynamic and creates an environment where honest dialogue is possible. Additionally, this deliberate construction helps to reduce stereotypes and prejudice, while also helping students to have conversations across and through lines of difference. The purpose of IGD is to help students develop the skills needed to engage with people of different backgrounds. IGD emphasizes the importance of listening and learning from others who have varied experiences. Given the increasing diversity of our society and college campuses, and that students are coming to college from segregated home and schooling environments, the skills students develop in IGD help them engage with classmates who may come from very different environments than themselves. Scores of researchers have documented the effectiveness of intergroup dialogue in college and university settings, and its potential to have a positive impact on social norms for students talking across difference (Engberg, 2004; (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Hurtado, 2001; Hurtado, 2005).

IGD was developed in the late 1980’s at the University of Michigan as a social justice program to promote interaction and dialogue among students with differing backgrounds (Zúñiga, Nagda, Chesler, & Cytron-Walker, 2007). IGD emerged out of the tradition of social psychology, an area of study grounded in the philosophy that human actions are shaped by our social environments and interactions with others. Because of this conceptual and disciplinary orientation, IGD differs from the other types of dialogue mentioned above. IGD is a co-facilitated group process that focuses on the interactions between people and addresses critical social issues rooted in inequality and prejudice. The goals of IGD are therefore to build relationships, understand conflict, and encourage civic participation and engagement in social change (Dessel & Rogge, 2008).

While IGD has roots in social psychology, the program has been adopted at numerous colleges and universities around the United States and is housed in a variety of academic homes. On some campuses IGD programs are housed in the psychology department, and in others it is based in sociology or communication. These different disciplines shape the orientation of IGD programs, and determine the specific skills students gain. Despite their different disciplinary homes, IGD programs have the goals of bringing groups of students together from different social identities to talk through difference; or, as Smith (2009) states, intergroup relations work “is fundamentally about building relationships across difference” (p. 179).

IGD transcends traditional conceptions of dialogue that define it as a conversation. Rather, it is a particular type of conversation that aims to promote understanding, social justice and change (Dwyer, Gigliotti, & Lee, 2014). IGD engages students in social justice education by debunking master narratives and introducing them to counter narratives that demonstrate the ways in which “social structures and institutions function to allocate privilege and sustain societal inequities” (Villanova University, 2015). These guiding narratives and social structures have a profound impact on one’s relationship with others—particularly those with different backgrounds. IGD is described by Dessel, Rogge, and Garlington (2006) as “a public process designed to involve individuals and groups in an exploration of societal issues such as politics, racism, religion, and culture that are often flashpoints for polarization and social conflict” (p. 303). The authors further differentiate IGD as a safe, facilitated, communal experience. Students involved in IGD develop listening skills, broaden their own perspectives, and increase their understanding of structural inequality.

When it comes to creating dialogue between groups on college campuses, there are a variety of different dialogue programs in practice with specific goals. Some programs focus on mending relationships between specific groups on campus, while others manage conflict, or provide training and skills for student groups and/or staff (Smith, 2009). Still other programs focus on promoting understanding between groups of different people (Intergroup Relations, 2015).

After first launching more than twenty five years ago, IGD retains the mission of being social justice oriented and engages students in learning that involves understanding social identities and group-based inequalities, encourages building of cross-group relationships, and cultivates social responsibility. Through focusing on content dealing with inequalities, intergroup dialogue fosters engagement that is intellectual, affective, self-reflective and in dialogic relation with others, personal, structural, and that connects dialogue to action (Zúñiga, et al., 2007). Dessel, et al. (2006) state that IGD is “a process designed to involve individuals and groups in an exploration of societal issues about which views differ, often the extent that polarization and conflict occur” (p. 304). It is through this difference – and conflict – that dialogue is created and learning emerges.

The benefits of IGD have been widely noted and highlighted in research (Nagda, Kim, & Truelove, 2004; Schoem, 2003). As Schoem, et al. (2001) noted, “Perhaps the

most compelling evidence of [the IGD] program impact involves studies that have examined individual commitment to take action and participation in social justice issues after the dialogue experience” (p. 30). Aligning with the research on IGD and the goals of the program, Villanova’s IGD program also aims to have students engaged in social justice initiatives and take what they have learned from IGD beyond their classroom experiences, as well as beyond their time in college. Moreover, the IGD program at Villanova University maintains a commitment to lifelong transformation which aligns with the goals of servant leadership, including an intentional focus on the needs of others, an unwavering desire to cultivate community, and a commitment to building empathy and understanding with those whom one leads and serves (Spears, 2002). Both IGD and servant leadership are characterized by exhibiting humility (Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005) learning another’s story, having courage to ask questions (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011), trusting one another and the process (Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005) , modeling integrity and authenticity (Wong & Davey, 2007), and building community with others from various backgrounds (Laub,1999) . The overlapping characteristics and qualities of IGD and servant leadership are clear and stronger connections should be drawn between these areas of study, which we will present in greater detail at the conclusion of this essay.

Leadership Development at Villanova University

As Day (2001) acknowledges in his review of the leadership development literature, an important distinction marks leader development from leadership development. Whereas leader development is an investment in one’s human capital, leadership development seeks to strengthen the social capital of an organization. Leadership development calls for a focus on interpersonal competencies, as opposed to the intrapersonal competencies of leader development (p. 584). This emphasis on leadership as a communicative process of social influence resonates with other work on the topic (Fairhurst, 2007; Northouse, 2015; Ruben, De Lisi, & Gigliotti, in press). Like Day (2001), we borrow our definition of leadership development from McCauley, Moxley, and Van Velsor (1998). Leadership development is understood to be the expanding of the collective capacity of organizational members to engage effectively in leadership roles and processes. The Center for Multicultural Affairs, the department that houses the IGD program, and the Office of Student Development, that houses the Villanova Leadership Academy, are both committed to the social, emotional, and spiritual development of the students – a commitment that formally and informally nurtures student leadership development. Villanova University is a Catholic and Augustinian university located in the suburbs of Philadelphia. As expressed in Villanova University’s mission statement,

the University community welcomes and respects members of all faiths who seek to nurture a concern for the common good and who share an enthusiasm for the challenge of responsible and productive citizenship in order to build a just and peaceful world (Villanova University, 2015, paragraph 2).

The principles of servant leadership and IGD outlined in this essay align with the guiding values of the Villanova community, Veritas (Truth), Unitas (Unity), and Caritas (Love).

Building upon and integrating literature on servant leadership, the next section shall present four ways of understanding these intersections in the context of our leadership development efforts: dialogue as a competency for acting as a servant leader, dialogue as a means to engage about societal injustices, dialogue as a primary value for servant leadership, and dialogue as constitutive of servant leadership itself. These intersecting observations ultimately position dialogue as a central imperative for servant leadership – a critical competency for servant leadership development and constitutive of servant leadership itself. This proposed model advances the literature on servant leadership and dialogue, while presenting various ways of conceptualization and demonstrating servant leadership through dialogic practice.

Intersection #1: Dialogue as a competency for servant leaders

Communication skills related to careful listening and meaningful dialogue are cultivated among students in the Villanova IGD program. IGD classes are led by two co-facilitators who guide students through a four-stage process through which they grow in their understanding of dialogue and listening intently to one another, and through these processes deepen their understanding of one another. First, they get to know one another and build trust (stage 1). Next, they practice careful listening and other communication skills as they begin to share personal experiences (stage 2). Third, they discuss contemporary or hot topics on campus or in the media (stage 3), and finally they explore what it means to be an ally and how to take action (stage 4) (Zúñiga & Nagda, 2001). This model allows a deeper conceptualization and operationalization of dialogue for student participants and encourages them to reflect on their involvement in the cultivation of dialogic relationships.

Villanova's Program on Intergroup Relations (IGR) is one in which we promote building relationships between students by equipping them with the skills to communicate with one another effectively through difference. Classes are intentionally structured such that the students have a variety of social identities. In classes, students use both class readings as well as their own experiences as a basis to engage in intellectual and authentic conversation about difference. While scholarly articles provide students with context and research to support various perspectives, the personal experiences students bring to classes allow them to connect to the material in new ways that gives a face and a name to the intellectual content. It is this pairing that allows students to engage in thoughtful inquiry with one another and connect to new experiences with greater empathy. Engaging the concepts of privilege, power, difference, and patience are key to connecting fully and gaining mutual understanding. Dialogue is communicating with the goal of understanding others, and is therefore, distinct from debate (where there is a "winner"), and discussion (which does not have the specified goal of understanding the other). As a result of their participation in IGR classes, students may develop the skills

necessary to use dialogic communication as a means to engage in conversation about injustice—both on campus and beyond.

Intersection #2: Dialogue as a means to engage about societal injustice

Societal injustices reflect a need for increased servant leadership. These injustices are indicative of a lack of respect, understanding, and concern for the other. The commitment to the growth of others, an important dimension of servant leadership, stands in stark contrast with the reality of societal injustice. Whereas these injustices call into question or disregard the dignity and worth of others, servant leadership recognizes the intrinsic value of all people (Spears, 2010). One way of further engaging with these injustices is through dialogue. For Bohm and Peat (1987), “dialogue can be considered as a free flow of meaning between people in communication, in the sense of a stream that flows between banks” (p. 241). The imagery presented here represents the free flow of dialogue that requires both intentionality and resilience in flowing between, over, and under the banks of one’s interpersonal experiences. This image of a free-flowing stream may also provide a useful illustration of working through obstacles that disrupt the stream of dialogue, particularly those incidents that are indicative of societal injustice. In addressing these systemic obstacles, the hope of the IGR co-facilitators is that students in the program will complete courses with a sense of engagement in social justice leading toward action. In addition, we expect students will develop a willingness to intervene amid conflict and social injustice and serve as an ally to others. These actions are representative of servant leadership behaviors. As the myriad obstacles to dialogue attempt to disrupt the flow of meaning, the four-stage model grounds students in a process that cultivates meaningful dialogue in a way that is best oriented for aspiring servant leaders. An understanding of dialogue can help us to expand upon the practical suggestions offered by Spears (2010) as a way of demonstrating a commitment to the growth of people. As Spears offers, “The servant leader recognizes the tremendous responsibility to do everything in his or her power to nurture the personal and professional growth of employees and colleagues” (p. 29). Through dialogue, servant leaders can also create an inclusive space where others can succeed.

Villanova’s dialogue program also reflects the interdependence between two individuals and the interdependent nature of social relationships. It presents an opportunity for individuals to focus their attention on the “between persons” in a given communicative moment with a commitment to dialogic civility (Arnett & Arneson, 1999; Buber, 1947). Dialogue emerges when individuals, through an appreciation and deep respect for what the other has to offer, can be heard despite the distractions of everyday life. This notion of the “between” speaks to those profound and rare moments when two individuals or groups encounter the space between “me” and “you” where there is common understanding, mutual respect, and genuine inclusion of the other. This language is consistent with the writing on servant leadership, in particular what van Dierendonck (2011) describes as a “person-oriented attitude” (p. 1230).

True community hinges on effective dialogue. As Bohm & Peat (1987) suggest, when engaging in free dialogue, two or more people with equal status observe the following principles: they listen to each other with detachment, suspend opinion and judgment, allow the free flow of thought and feeling, and accept and appreciate differing beliefs or understanding. Particularly in the context of our Catholic institution, dialogue equips individuals with the ability to manage difference and fragmentation in a respectful, productive, caring, and mutually beneficial manner. Villanova's guiding principles are brought to life in those moments of authentic dialogue. Just as individuals become more whole as they open themselves up to dialogic relationships, communities also thrive when groups of individuals seek mutual understanding. Dialogue holds much promise for the promotion of understanding within groups, organizations, and communities, and thus is an integral step toward social justice. At Villanova, our understanding and enactment of social justice is rooted in the beliefs of truth, unity, and love. In order to connect with others through these three pillars of our institutional mission, dialogue is essential. One cannot understand another's truth without dialogue. Unity cannot be created without dialogue and understanding of one another's story. Finally, love is fostered through the understanding of truths and the unity formed through the process of deep, honest, and authentic dialogue. Once these pillars have been attended to, there is an opportunity to engage in action and social justice – in other words, there becomes an opportunity to put servant leadership into practice as a way of addressing these problems.

While several types of dialogue may lead to social justice, we believe that IGD, in particular, is an effective type of dialogue for reducing prejudice on college campuses and encouraging positive intergroup interactions (Gurin & Nagda, 2006). Allport's (1954) and Pettigrew's (1998) research outlines the conditions necessary for optimal intergroup contact: (1) equal group status within the setting, (2) individuals with common goals, (3) opportunities for intergroup cooperation, (4) support from authorities, and (5) the opportunity to become friends. All five of these conditions are met in Villanova's IGD courses. IGD courses provide supportive environments for students from different racial backgrounds to interact cross-racially in a way that promotes intensive dialogue and greater understanding across differences.

Through the process of self-inquiry and self-understanding in IGD, students cultivate speaking and listening with compassion, which are essential practices for servant leadership (Sendjaya, Sarros, & Santora, 2008; Spears, 2002). Becoming aware of one's fears, prejudices, and insecurities through ongoing reflection and being awake and attentive to oneself, others, and the environment are foundational to effective leadership (Rogers, 2003; Boyatzis & McKee, 2005). By supporting students in developing self-awareness and social consciousness, IGD prepares them to be effective servant leaders in a complex, global society. Bohm (1996) says that dialogue:

can lead to the creation of something new only if people are able freely to listen to each other, without prejudice, and without trying to influence each other. Each has to be interested primarily in truth and coherence, so

that he is ready to drop his old ideas and intentions, and be ready to go on to something different, when this is called for (p. 3).

For its ability to create something new between individuals from different backgrounds, dialogue may be understood to be an appropriate means for engagement about societal injustices through the lens of servant leadership. Once again, servant leadership is accessible to all individuals who recognize the intrinsic value in the well-being of all people. From this perspective, the movement towards social justice relies upon open and honest communication, active listening, and mutual understanding – all of which are critical to both the dialogic process and the implementation of servant leadership.

Intersection #3: Dialogue as a primary value for servant leadership development

The third intersection is that dialogue should be understood as a primary value for the development of servant leadership. Ferch (2005) speaks to the importance of dialogue in understanding servant leadership as he states, “In meaningful dialogue the servant as leader submits to a higher perspective, one that can be pivotal to the development of the self in relation to others” (p. 106). Villanova University has placed a renewed emphasis on undergraduate leadership education (Gigliotti, 2015; Gigliotti, in press) – an emphasis on cultivating mission-centered change agents in a world that demands a servant leadership orientation. The emphasis on cultivating dialogic skills is situated within the broader undergraduate leadership curriculum. In practice, it becomes difficult to divorce these dialogic skills from leadership development itself. For example, in an other-oriented approach to leadership, the values of listening, empathy, and understanding are critical to the leadership process. These skills may be taught to emerging or aspiring servant leaders through formal and informal leadership education initiatives. As Spears (2010) offers, “Servant leadership characteristics often occur naturally within many individuals; and, like many natural tendencies, they can be enhanced through learning and practice.” Dialogue is an essential ingredient to the enactment of servant leadership – one that can be cultivated and enhanced over time.

The Villanova Leadership Academy (VLA), is an interdisciplinary leadership initiative sponsored by the Office of Student Development at Villanova University. The program is intentionally designed to meet the intellectual, spiritual, and social needs of a diverse group of student leaders. Reflecting the institution’s emphasis on ethical leaders committed to the common good, the VLA fuses the social change model of leadership development (Higher Education Research Institute, 1996) and servant leadership literature with Catholic and Augustinian principles to create a Villanova-specific leadership certificate. The VLA offers two distinct tracks; one for emerging leaders (first-year students) and one for more seasoned students (junior and senior students). The first track, offered in the fall semester, facilitates the transition of emerging student leaders during their first semester at the university. Students who participate in the fall track learn the foundational characteristics of the social change model from faculty, staff, alumni,

and Augustinian representatives from the community and each student is paired with both a junior or senior mentor and a faculty/staff mentor. The second track, offered in the spring semester, allows both emerging leaders and current student leaders to enter into conversation with one another regarding servant leadership at Villanova. Grounded in the servant leadership literature, participants reflect on their personal, professional, and spiritual growth as leaders through eight workshops, facilitated by experts from the community. Students who complete the non-credit program receive a certificate of completion at a formal on-campus banquet at the end of each semester. Over 100 students typically participate in the program each semester. The program has received tremendous support from members of the community, with the university president even serving as a mentor for two first-year students.

VLA participants are challenged to examine their personal beliefs and assumptions in order to become more effective servant leaders both in the community and beyond. Additionally, by adopting a communication-oriented approach to leadership development, an emphasis on strengthening one's dialogic skills is interwoven into the leadership curriculum itself. For example, the introductory workshops highlight the ways in which leadership is accomplished through communication, the organizers of the IGD program facilitate a workshop on effective communication, and the workshops on bystander intervention, team dynamics, ethics, spirituality, and social responsibility all highlight the work of dialogue and effective communication. This approach to leadership education is not limited to Villanova (Komives, Dugajin, Owen, Slack, & Wagner, 2011). In fact, as a common approach to undergraduate leadership education, dialogue is both explicitly and implicitly understood to be an important value for preparing servant leaders. Students who completed the VLA program have advanced as leaders and agents of change on our campus. As Ferch (2005) suggests, "Meaningful dialogue gives rise to the forces that unhinge the way we harm each other, opening us toward a more accepting and empathic understanding of one another" (p. 107). One student speaks to the power of a dialogue-centered approach to leadership education in her assessment of the programs:

Two years after the tragic events of 9/11, my family and I made the move to America in order to gain more opportunities in the land of the free. Though I was merely eight years old, I experienced daily racist remarks and watched as my family suffered due to negative stereotyping by the media. In [the Leadership Academy] session, the presenters were able to bring alive my experiences by conveying the importance of [communication]. The ways in which clear communication was highlighted is also of utmost importance since transformation is achieved through communication. I learned just how crucial it is for a leader to be able to listen well and articulate thoughts since the goal will not be achieved otherwise.

Dialogue emerges as a primary value for the study and practice of servant leadership. Furthermore, the work of leadership education privileges dialogue for its power and potential in developing servant leaders across institutions.

Intersection #4: Dialogue as constitutive of servant leadership

A traditional understanding of leadership typically considers the leader and his or her mechanisms and strategies for influencing others. These mechanisms and strategies all involve communication. More contemporary views of leadership, including servant leadership, tend to explore the co-construction of leadership based on one's interactions with followers. As Ruben & Stewart (2016) describe, communication is a process through which individuals create and use information to relate to the environment and one another. This implies that communication outcomes are co-constructed between senders and receivers—and leaders and followers. As a process of social influence, leadership is enacted, constructed, and constituted through communication between leaders and followers (Ruben, et al., in press). Bohm's (1996) conceptualization of dialogue captures this interaction between individuals involved in the communicative interaction whereby “two people are making something in common, i.e., creating something new together” (p. 3). As Ruben, et al. (in press) suggest, a communication-oriented understanding of this process makes complex that which might otherwise be understood as a seemingly basic, intuitive, and taken-for-granted accomplishment. Servant leadership itself, as a way of “being” in relation to others, allows for a more nuanced understanding of the role of communication in constituting the process of leadership itself.

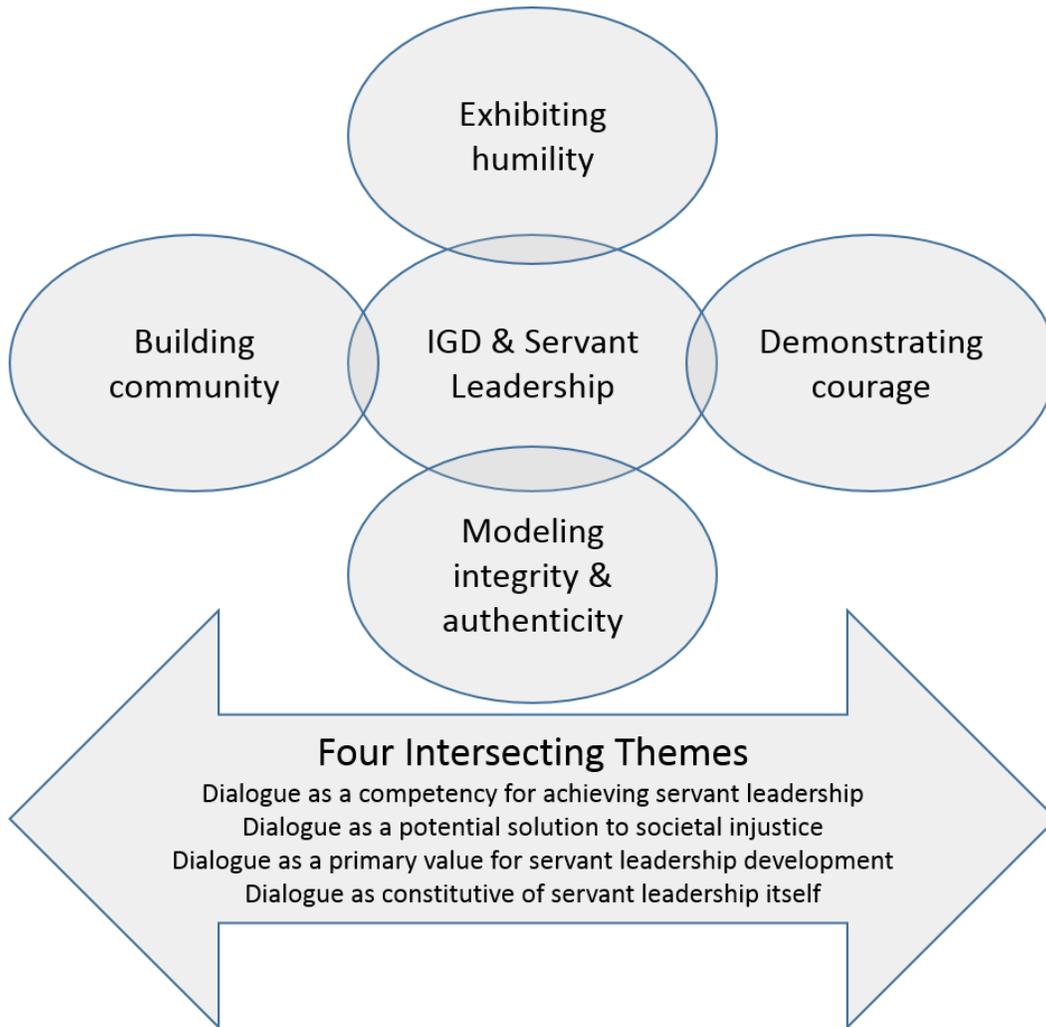
According to these intersecting claims, there are a number of potential directions for exploring dialogue and the enactment of servant leadership. First, if leadership is understood to be a process of social influence and if servant leadership foregrounds an other-oriented way of relating to those whom one leads, then dialogue may be seen as a key element to this communicative interaction. If leadership is understood to be co-constructed between leaders and followers and if servant leadership privileges empathy, trust, and mutual understanding between leader and follower, then dialogue may be critical to understanding the “between” (Buber, 1947) that allows for this co-construction to occur. If leadership, particularly servant leadership, is seen to be a selfless way of existing in relation to those whom one leads, then dialogue may be one important way to operationalize this way of “being” (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). Finally, if we adopt a communication-oriented understanding of the leadership process, then dialogue may be identified as constitutive of leadership itself – more than just a component or outcome of leadership, dialogue merits attention as central to the very existence of leadership, particularly servant leadership.

Presenting a New Conceptual Framework

As offered up to this point, dialogue is helpful to understanding and practicing servant leadership. Dialogue is a specific competency associated with the practice of servant leaders, it is a means through which to engage about injustices at the societal level that require the attention of servant leadership, it is a primary value that undergirds servant leadership development, and at its core, dialogue is constitutive of servant leadership itself. These intersections present a new way of thinking about the connections

between dialogue and servant leadership. This conceptual framework allows us to think more deeply about the shared qualities between these two phenomena. As offered earlier in this essay, both IGD and servant leadership are characterized by exhibiting humility (Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005), learning another’s story, having courage (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011) to ask questions, trusting (Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005) one another and the process, modeling integrity and authenticity (Wong & Davey, 2007), and building community (Laub,1999) with others from various backgrounds. The four intersecting themes presented in figure 1 allow us to think through these four shared qualities in richer detail.

Figure 1.



These connections play out accordingly. By presenting dialogue as a core competency for achieving servant leadership, then humility, trust, integrity/authenticity, and community are all suggestive of practices associated with the practice of servant leadership. As a potential solution to societal injustice, the various connections between

IGD and servant leadership are strategies utilized by those committed to addressing these systemic challenges. Furthermore, these four shared characteristics are foundational to servant leadership development and education, particularly in equipping servant leaders with the tools needed for effective dialogue. Finally, the very promise of servant leadership hinges upon these shared characteristics. If dialogue is understood to be constitutive of servant leadership itself, then the very promise of servant leadership hinges upon these shared characteristics.

We believe that this conceptual model, along with the shared characteristics of servant leadership and dialogue, could benefit from additional empirical research. For example, guiding questions might include the following: In what ways do these shared characteristics play out in contemporary organizational life? How do these dialogic skills influence one's effectiveness as a servant leader? Finally, in what ways can leadership education initiatives best prepare leaders in these four shared qualities? It is our hope that these intersecting themes provide an accessible point of entry into the study and practice of servant leadership through dialogue. Not only can the scholarly literature benefit from additional research in this area, but so too can a society that is in demand of other-oriented leaders – leaders who demonstrate an understanding of and proficiency in the tools of dialogic communication.

CONCLUSION

Greenleaf's (1977) work on servant leadership goes beyond simply describing the key components of this approach to leadership. His work continues to re-orient leadership scholars and practitioners to consider leadership not only from the perspective of the one who leads, but perhaps more importantly, from the individual who is empowered by the servant leader. Referring back to an opening theme from the introduction, millennials are regularly criticized for their inability or unwillingness to engage in dialogue. Stories of hate crimes, racist actions, and a general disregard for the other continue to plague the American college campus. Authentic dialogue, like servant leadership itself, has a healing potential and may provide one way of adequately addressing these hateful acts. The dignity and worth of all individuals remains a priority in the aforementioned dialogue-servant leadership intersections. As expressed by Buber (1947), "Every person born into the world represents something new, something that never existed before, something original and unique. (p. 137)." Colleges and universities play an important role in preparing students to excel as professionals, leaders, and citizens. This commitment calls for an approach to leadership education that privileges dialogue and effective communication, where dialogue is understood to be a competency for achieving servant leadership, a potential solution to societal injustice, a primary value for servant leadership development, and constitutive of servant leadership itself. Servant leaders who maintain an understanding of and expertise in dialogue will be well-prepared to positively influence and support others within the rapidly shifting and increasingly diverse landscape of our global society.

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