POSITIVE FORMS OF LEADERSHIP (PFL):  
AN INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK

The recent ethical crises in business, cultural and religious institutions have lead to a public call for more responsible leadership as well as an upsurge in academic research into new positive forms of leadership. In this paper, I review the literature published in the last decade on authentic, spiritual, servant and ethical leadership and present a framework that suggests how these forms differ from traditional forms of leadership (transformation and charismatic) based on the dimensions of leader intent and organizational outcomes.

Leadership Quarterly’s former editor, Jerry Hunt, recently described the field of leadership studies as “literally exploding with new developments” (Hunt, 2005), with such a plethora of new concepts and constructs that the field could almost be described to be at a “tipping point”. Particularly notable has been the apparent upsurge in research into new positive forms of leadership (PFL): authentic, spiritual, ethical, moral, responsible, Level 5, prosocial, primal and even a resurgence of discussion about servant leadership. After the relatively early identification of charismatic (House, 1977) and transformational leadership (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985), both of which also posit positive outcomes, it appears that the leadership literature has been inundated with a seemingly endless supply of new positive forms of leadership.

However, a recent review (Yammarino et al., 2005) of 348 theoretical and empirical papers written on leadership between 1995-2005, identified 17 primary areas of research, but did not include any of the positive forms of leadership listed above. Ironically, charismatic and transformational leadership, which have been around for almost 30 years, were considered “contemporary” forms therein and work in this area, represented 61.5% of all papers published in the last decade. On the other hand, while research into PFL appears to have been prolific, academic discourse is only in its nascent stages (Fry, 2003) and concept elaborations remain largely in specialty journals.

This literature review therefore will take stock of the theoretical and empirical research done on PFL from 1995 – 2006 to assess its emergence, and relative importance as compared to more established forms of leadership. This paper also responds to the call for conceptual clarity between the various new PFL (Cooper et al., 2005) and examines points of divergence and convergence not only within and across the forms, but also between the new PFL and the more broadly accepted transformational and charismatic leadership forms. Stated differently: Are any of the new positive forms of leadership (e.g.: authentic, spiritual) really new? If so, how do they differ from transformational and charismatic leadership?

After briefly reviewing transformational and charismatic leadership, the emergence of PFL is placed in its historical context and the methodology for the literature review is made explicit. This is followed by an overview and elaboration of the literature on the various types of PFL: authentic, spiritual and ethical leadership. A review of servant leadership is also included, although the concept is not considered new. The various PFL are then compared against each other and differentiated from transformational and charismatic leadership within an integrative framework along the dimensions of:
leader attributes/values, leader behaviors, leader intentions, follower outcomes and organizational outcomes. Despite significant similarities, several conceptual differences separate PFL from earlier leadership forms and I argue that a focus on the dimensions of leader intent and organizational outcomes are unique contributions. As such, PFL are seen to augment and extend transformational leadership theories along these dimensions and a conceptual model is proposed. Limitations and implications for further research are also discussed.

Transformational/Charismatic Leadership: The New Traditional?

Although transformational and charismatic leadership theories have been around for almost 30 years, they are still considered and described in the literature as the “new forms” or “contemporary” forms of leadership (Hunt, 1999; Yammarino et al., 2002; Avolio & Bass, 2004; Yammarino et al. 2005). In a 1999 review of the field, Hunt described the emergence of transformational/charismatic leadership theories as a paradigm shift away from the so-called “traditional” or “classical” forms of leadership (trait-based, attribution, implicit and situational contingency models of leadership). The switch in focus to transformational (and to a lesser degree charismatic) leadership arose not only as a response to what has been called the Doom & Gloom period of leadership studies (Hunt, 1999), but also to an increasing call to better understand the full range of leadership styles, particularly the strong forces of leadership – those that “motivate associates to perform to their full potential over time, either for the good of the individual, leader or larger collective” (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

Transformational leaders are described as “inspirational, intellectually stimulating, challenging, visionary, development oriented and determined to maximize performance” (Avolio & Bass, 2004). This leadership style is seen as an expansion of transactional leadership which focuses more on the exchange between managers and associates through constructive and corrective behaviors, described as Contingent Reward, and Management by Exception, respectively (Avolio & Bass, 2002; Avolio & Bass, 2004). Both transactional and transformational leadership form parts of the Full Range of Leadership measured by the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), however, transformational leadership is seen as an augmented form of leadership (over transactional) that allows for superior results through the employment of one or more of the following dimensions: Idealized Leadership, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation and Individualized Consideration (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

Charismatic leadership is defined in terms of the leaders’ influence over followers and includes behaviors such as “articulating an appealing vision, communicating high performance expectations, displaying self confidence, role modeling exemplary behavior, expressing confidence in followers’ abilities to achieve goals, and emphasizing ideological aspects of work and collective identity” (Yammarino et al., 2002). Charismatic leadership is generally captured in the Idealized Leadership measure of the MLQ and is therefore quite often considered a component of transformational leadership rather than a separate construct – although considerable conceptual work (see e.g. Conger & Kanungo, 1998) and empirical studies (Yammarino et al., 2002) often separate out this dimension for analysis. The general distinction between charismatic and transformational leadership theories is the recognition that a leader may be charismatic without being transformational – followers can identify with the charismatic leader, but no real change occurs.

In response to early criticisms of charismatic leadership based on the potential negative side of these leadership styles (i.e.: narcissism, authoritarianism, need for power, promotion of dependency), the constructs were modified to account for socialized (good) vs. personalized (bad) charismatic leadership (Howell, 1988). Similarly, authentic transformational leadership was contrasted from pseudo transformational leadership to delineate between the positive moral character and ethical values of a leader who acts in good vs. bad faith (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999).
Using Reichers and Schneider’s scientific construct development model (1990), Hunt (1999) argued that these new forms of transformational/charismatic leadership have successfully passed Phase I (concept introduction/elaboration) and are now in their concept evaluation/augmentation phase (Phase II) which is characterized by critical reviews of the constructs, elaborations on moderators and mediators, and a deluge of empirical studies to support or falsify the concepts. In fact, since first appearing in the literature, over 280 conceptual and empirical papers on transformational/charismatic leadership have been published (Yammarino et al., 2002; Yammarino et al., 2005).

Although there are still some dissenting perspectives regarding the conceptual strengths of transformational and charismatic leadership constructs (Yukl, 1999; Beyer, 1999; Fry 2003; Fry et al. 2005) as well as seemingly pervasive levels-of-analysis issues (Yammarino et al., 2002), I would argue that transformational and charismatic leadership theories may actually be entering the third stage of scientific construct development: consolidation/accommodation (Reichers & Schneider, 1990). In general, transformational/charismatic leadership have now become the taken for granted default leadership forms, and studies on their antecedents and consequences are very well cited (Yammarino et al, 2002). In addition to the “remarkable flowering of interest in charismatic and transformational leadership” (Conger & Hunt, 1999) and the striking pervasiveness of studies of these forms over the last 30 years, the appearance of several literature reviews (Hunt & Conger, 1999) and meta-analyses (Yammarino et al., 2002) suggest a consolidation of the constructs, as well as a general acceptance of transformational and charismatic leadership for use as a baseline in future leadership theory building.

If this is accurate, for today’s researchers, transformational and charismatic leadership theories have now actually become the new traditional leadership approaches. In fact, they represent over 61% of all leadership research in the last decade as measured by Yammarino and his colleagues (2005). Given this possibility, what then should we define as really new leadership theories? This literature review found over 61 articles and book chapters published in the last ten years on various positive forms of leadership: authentic, spiritual and ethical leadership. There has also been an apparent resurgence of interest in servant leadership, a theory which as also been around for 30 years. If these are added to the Yammarino et al. review (2005), PFL would account for 15% of all research in the last decade as depicted in Figure 1. Why this sudden appearance of new leadership models? This question is considered and discussed in the next section.

**Figure 1: Leadership approaches 1995-2006**

Constructed from tables in: Yammarino et al., 2005 and this literature review
A Call for Positive Forms of Leadership

Most PFL articles begin with an articulation of the troubling moral and ethical climate of our time (e.g.: Mendonca, 2001; Fulmer, 2004). In a post 9/11 world, where Western ideals of security and prosperity have been shaken, corporate scandals that recount individual greed and rampant materialism, as in the cases of Enron and WorldCom, have led to an increased distrust, if not disdain, for corporate leaders. In fact, over two-thirds of Americans believe that none, very few or only some corporations operate in a fair and honest manner (Seidman, 2004). This crisis of confidence is not only in corporate America, but also in public administrations (e.g.: White House response to Hurricane Katrina), cultural organizations (e.g.: Olympic judging scandals) and religious institutions (e.g.: Catholic church cover-ups) bringing to the forefront a more public discourse on issues of trust, honesty, integrity and morality, as well as a re-examination of individual and collective spiritual needs and requirements.

Even within the field of management, there has been a growing recognition of the role that these “higher order needs” may play in organizations. The Academy of Management formed a special interest group in Management Spirituality and Religion in 1999 which now has over 660 members and is larger than some more main-stream interest groups such as Operations Management (575 current members). A recent issue of Academy of Management Learning & Education (September 2006) was dedicated to Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility. Even the upcoming theme for AOM 2007 is “Doing Well by Doing Good”, acknowledging that corporations and organizations have a role to play not only in maximizing the welfare of their own constituents, but also for their stakeholders and broader society as well. Ethical training programs, business ethic courses, codes of ethics, ethics committees and even CEO (Chief Ethics Officers) are becoming operational mandatories in today’s competitive landscape (Seidman, 2004). While the idea that organizational leaders need to be more attentive to their moral and ethical responsibilities is not a new one, and in fact can be found in many of the seminal works of management thinkers such as Barnard (1938) and Mary Parker Follett (in Graham, 1995), there is an increasing realization today that these obligations can no longer be ignored.

Methods

In this work, I mirrored the methodology and publication selection procedures used in the 1995-2005 Yammarino et al. review, however, given that their research did not include most of 2005, more recent articles and publications have also been included. A global search for PFL theories in citations and abstracts alone in ProQuest and the Web of Science databases yielded over 1,000 results. As such, separate searches for authentic, spiritual, moral, ethical, legacy, responsible, Level 5, primal and servant leadership within the major leadership, management and psychological journals identified by Yammarino et al. were conducted. These major journals included: Academy of Management Journal, Academy of Management Review, Administrative Science Quarterly, Journal of Applied Psychology, Journal of Management, Journal of Organizational Behavior and The Leadership Quarterly.

The articles returned from this search were then examined to ensure that PFL constructs were identified by the author as key concepts, and appeared either in the paper title, abstracts or key words. At this stage, moral and ethical leadership groups were consolidated as were the legacy and spiritual leadership groups, given the limited amount of distinctly separate theories (the concepts were either used interchangeably or as dimensions of each other). The reference lists from these articles were then scanned to ensure that no important articles were left out. This led to the inclusion of several more minor journals that may have produced special issues on PFL (i.e.: Leadership & Organizational Development) as well as several edited books on PFL (i.e.: Authentic Leadership Theory and Practice). While this field has literally exploded with practitioner-audience books which have been widely cited in the academic literature (i.e.: Authentic leadership, George, 2003; Capturing the Heart of Leadership, Fairholm, 1997),
a thorough review of these “non-academic” books was deemed outside the scope of this review. Specialty publications (i.e.: *Journal of Business Ethics* and *Global Virtue Ethics Review*) were also not considered and unpublished papers or conference proceedings as well as articles from other academic fields such as health and education were also omitted.

**Overview of Positive Forms of Leadership**

All together, the search produced 61 journal articles and book chapters published between 1995-2006, with the greatest support for the relatively recent appearance of authentic leadership with 30 total publications (87% of which were published in 2005 or 2006). Servant leadership yielded 14 journal articles, followed by spiritual leadership with 12 articles. Ethical leadership was rarely treated as a separate theory, and most often incorporated as a component of other PFL, however, the search did produce 5 articles that specifically identified this type of leadership as a distinct and measurable construct. Other labels that could be considered as PFL, such as Level 5 leadership, and primal leadership, have had very little theoretical or empirical research published in academic journals to date and have therefore not been included in the literature review, but are briefly acknowledged herein.

Interestingly, none of the 61 articles was found within the major (non-leadership) journals considered by Yammarino et al. (2005). The majority of articles were published in *Leadership Quarterly*, which had special issues on both authentic leadership and spiritual leadership in 2005. Although this appears to support a general lack of academic approval of PFL, the original Yammarino et al. study (2005) also had only approximately 20% of its reviewed articles appearing in these same major publications. As such, this may be more a reflection on the leadership field as a whole, rather than on PLF particularly.

Out of the 61 articles reviewed, less than 25% were empirical in nature; the majority of articles are still conceptual and theory building. Clearly then, PFL concepts are still in their infancy (Fry, 2003) and could be classified as in Phase I of Reichers and Schneider’s construct development model - concept introduction/elaboration (Reichers & Schneider, 1990; Dent et al., 2005). The following overview of the literature within the different types of PFL and subsequent discussion across similar dimensions attempts to construct an integrated framework to assess the status of the field to date.

**Elaboration on the Types of PFL**

For each of the four types of PFL considered, I first provide a review of the literature on the topic in the last decade, including a brief description of the theory, model or definition most commonly accepted. I then turn to an analysis of conceptual similarities and differences both among the various PFL constructs, but also between PFL and the *new traditional* leadership theories (transformational/charismatic), before putting forth an integrated framework of PFL as an augmented and extended form of transformational leadership.

**Authentic leadership**

In the last few years, numerous practitioner books (e.g.: George, 2003; Goffee & Jones, 2006) and at least 30 articles have been published on authentic leadership. Out of the articles, the majority of work in this area remains at the theory development stage, with only 4 studies to date being of an empirical nature.
The generally accepted definition of authentic leadership can be found in Luthans and Avolio (2003: 243) and is described as a process “which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self-development. The authentic leader is confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, transparent, moral/ethical, future-oriented, and gives priority to developing associates to be leaders.” A number of articles trace the history of the term “authentic”, placing authentic/in-authentic leadership within the philosophical study of authenticity as a moral virtue or ethical choice, as well as psychological meanings of authenticity as a trait/state or source of identity (Novicevic et al. 2005 and 2006; Gardner et al., 2005). But for the most part, discourse on authentic leadership relates either to 1) the values/attributes of authentic leaders, 2) the behaviors of authentic leaders, 3) the relationship between authentic leadership and positive follower outcomes or 4) authentic leadership development (ALD). In fact, ALD as a theory is quite often used interchangeably with authentic leadership theory, although clearly the two concepts should be measurably distinct. This is particularly troubling given the lack of empirical research into the positive affects of authentic leadership itself, resulting in a number of scholars questioning if the “cart has been put before the horse” in this conceptual development stage (Chan, 2005; Cooper, 2005).

1) Values/Attributes: A number of theoretical pieces examine the inherent attributes of authentic leaders, such as positive other-directed emotions and self-transcendence values such as equality, honesty, loyalty and responsibility (Michie & Gootie, 2005) as part of the positive psychological capacity required for authentic leadership (Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Core attributes discussed as part of the authentic leadership construct include trustworthiness, integrity, accountability, credibility, respect and fairness (Gardner et al., 2005). Further, positive emotions such as hope and optimism (Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Avolio et al., 2004), a heightened level of moral capacity (May et al., 2003; Hannah et al., 2005) and a positive self-concept, emotional intelligence and self-awareness - including self-clarity and self-certainty - are also seen as central characteristics of authentic leaders (Chan et al., 2005; Illies et al, 2005; Gardner et al., 2005; Shamir et al., 2005). In these studies, authentic leadership is viewed generally as an individual process.

2) Behaviors: Leader self-regulation, including balanced processing and relational transparency, as well as positive modeling, personal and social identification, emotional contagion, supporting self-determination and positive social exchanges are identified by researchers as key components of authentic leadership behavior (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner et al., 2005). Recognizing moral dilemmas, transparently evaluating alternatives, as well as developing intentions to act in a manner consistent with one’s own evaluations, are also considered positive behaviors related to authentic decision-making (May et al., 2003). Authentic leaders are also seen as builders of confidence and optimism as well as creators of hope and resilience (Gardner & Schermerhorn, 2004) and capable of using humor to emphasize their relational transparency (Hughes, 2005). In these studies, authentic leadership is seen as a positive relational force at the interpersonal level.

3) Follower outcomes: Although level-of-analysis issues are most apparent here (e.g. not explicitly stating individual, dyad, group or organizational levels in theory formulation or inference drawing), several articles deal specifically with the follower outcomes of authentic leadership behavior. For example, Ilies et al. (2005) look at the relationship between authentic leadership behavior and follower well being. Others postulate positive effects of authentic leadership on follower attitudes such as commitment, job satisfaction, empowerment and task engagement, as well as behaviors such as job performance and extra effort (Avolio et al., 2004). In fact, the relationships here were empirically tested with small entrepreneurial firms, finding employee’s perceptions of authentic leadership as the strongest single predictor of employee job satisfaction, organizational commitment and work happiness (Jensen & Luthans, 2006). In addition, follower reactions to authentic/in-authentic leadership behaviors were also empirically tested (Pittinsky & Tyson, 2005; Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2005) and found to be related to positive/negative perceptions of the leader and/or leader influence attempts.
Gardner et al. (2005) specifically put forth a model of authentic leadership that focuses on follower development (coined “authentic followership”) in an effort to link authentic leadership to veritable and sustained performance (defined as increased trust, engagement and workplace well being). Chan et al. (2005) augmented this theory to argue that leader authenticity will have a multiplier effect in the organization, fostering authentic behaviors in followers through a virtuous cycle. With the exception Chan et al. (2005) and Youssef & Luthans (2005), who looked at developing resiliency at multiple-levels, all of the theoretical models examined herein, deal with follower outcomes at the level of the dyad or group. While most arguments make implicit assumptions regarding positive organizational performance, little has been done to demonstrate how authentic leadership may actually lead to positive outcomes at the organizational or societal level.

4) Authentic Leadership Development (ALD): Most of the work in authentic leadership, while possibly highlighting particular values, attributes or behaviors, has explored these relationships while taking a distinctly developmental approach to authentic leadership (Cooper et al, 2005). In fact, Luthans & Avolio (2003) identify ALD as the key objective of furthering authentic leadership theory. Further, while comparing and contrasting authentic leadership from other PFL, Avolio & Gardner (2005) specifically discuss components of ALD, rather than the more conceptually distinct authentic leadership theory. That being said, a theme appearing in a number of ALD theories is the notion of a life-story or narrative approach to ALD (Shamir & Eilam, 2005; Sparrowe, 2005) and the importance of the leader’s personal history and trigger events in their development (Gardner et al., 2005; Eigel & Kuhnert, 2005). And despite arguing for conceptual clarity before engaging in further ALD theory building, Chan (2005) and Cooper (2005) both put forth recommendations for improved future research in authentic leadership development.

Spiritual leadership

Out of the 12 articles found on spiritual leadership, 4 were empirical and 8 were theoretical in nature. Perhaps more than any other PFL, spiritual leadership has been most extensively discussed in the popular press, with a proliferation of management books over the last 10 years penned by academics and practitioners alike (i.e.: Spiritual leadership, Capturing the Heart of Leadership, A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America). Within academia, however, spiritual leadership has usually been treated as just one field of inquiry within the broader context of workplace spirituality and therefore has received little specific attention in management journals (Fry, 2003; Benefiel, 2005; Reave, 2005). Further, this construct is often confounded with religious perspectives on leadership, which are often met with skepticism by an academia that favors reason and science-based research over faith-based investigations (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999).

The term spiritual leadership was first put forth by Fairholm in 1996, but a full definition and causal model of spiritual leadership was developed by Fry in 2003 comprising of “the values, attitudes and behaviors that are necessary to motivate one’s self and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership” (Fry, 2003: 711). The values required include hope/faith (i.e.: endurance, perseverance) and the behaviors needed entail creating a compelling vision and establishing an organizational culture based on altruistic love (i.e.: forgiveness, kindness, integrity, empathy, honesty, patience, courage, trust/loyalty and humility). Overall, Fry (2003) argues that intrinsic motivation based on vision, altruistic love and hope/faith will result in increased sense of spiritual survival (defined as calling and membership) that lead to positive organizational outcomes (defined as organizational commitment and productivity/continuous improvement).

In her review of over 150 studies on workplace spirituality, Reave (2005) provided evidence that these universal spiritual values and behaviors have consistently been linked to effective leadership as defined by various studies as: follower perceptions, motivation, satisfaction, retention, ethics and OCB
(Organizational Citizenship Behavior), as well as higher productivity/performance outcomes for groups, corporate sustainability and reputation. Again, common dimensions of spiritual values and practices reviewed included: integrity, honesty, humility, respect for others, fair treatment, caring and concern, listening, appreciating others and reflective practice (Reave, 2005).

The remaining theoretical papers on spiritual leadership were greatly confounded with religious meanings of “spirituality”. These two concepts are treated here as distinct, with spirituality a much broader concept concerned with qualities of human nature (i.e.: love, compassion, patience, tolerance….) and separate from the faith claims of any particular religious group (Fry, 2003). However, in formulating her conceptual framework for spiritual leadership, Benefiel (2005), for example, argues that other definitions have not been adequately grounded in the spirituality literature, but have focused on building more scientific rather than philosophical theories of leadership. She proposes that the spiritual leader can steer an organization’s journey to transformation through a process that mirrors an individual’s journey to spiritual enlightenment (awakening, transition, recovery, dark night and dawn) and uses the case of Reell Precision Manufacturing that has achieved success by embracing Judeo-Christian values and purpose into their mission and operations.

Further, Whittington et al. (2005) and Kriger et al. (2005) are also heavily skewed to religious interpretations of spiritual leadership. The former proposes a model for legacy leadership based on the leader characteristics (e.g. worthy of imitation, pure motive) and changed lives of followers associated with the teachings of Apostle Paul. The latter examines the commonalities in leader values amongst the world’s five major religions to extend the multiple-linkage contingency model of leadership to include a spiritual component. While there has been considerable debate about the role of spirituality and religion in the workplace (Reave, 2005), the primary shortcoming of these theoretical models lies in the difficulty of operationalizing the constructs and designing empirical research to test the theories.

This point was elaborated in Dent et al.’s (2005) empirical review of the spirituality and leadership literature which found overlapping, contradictory, expansive and personal definitions of spirituality used in academic research as well as a paucity of attempts to measure the construct. Although Dent focuses on identifying several themes in the broader spirituality literature (i.e.: linked to religion, epiphany, teachable), he concludes that there has been little done with respect to linking spirituality and leadership.

Overall, the empirical studies found in this field lacked general external validity. Although claiming to find support for a causal model of spiritual leadership, the conclusions of a study on a single helicopter attack squadron in Texas are hardly generalizable outside of military organizations (Fry et al., 2005). Parameshwar (2005) developed a model of spiritual leadership through ego-transcendence based on a textual analysis of the auto-biographies of ten international human rights leaders. Again, this model, with its extremely complex constructs (i.e.: demonstrating perspective agility, invoking transcendental epistemologies), would be difficult to measure in practice. The last empirical study tested spiritual leadership only implicitly, within the broader framework of workplace spirituality, finding that work unit performance was positively associated with work unit spirituality, and only hypothetically postulating about the role of leaders in fostering this spirituality (Duchon & Plowman, 2005). As such, much work has to be done in defining and measuring spiritual leadership in practice.

**Ethical leadership**

For the most part, the terms moral and ethical leadership have been used rather broadly when discussing any of the PFL and little has been done theoretically or empirically to differentiate these as distinct leadership styles. Rather, *moral and ethical leadership* is often used as a blanket term in
practitioner books and business publications and is usually linked as a component part to other theories, most specifically – transformational leadership (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Turner et al., 2002; Price, 2003). However, some theoretical and empirical work on ethical leadership is presented as conceptually separate from transformational leadership and other PFL. These works are discussed below.

The most widely cited review of ethical leadership is Kanungo & Mendonca’s 1996 book *Ethical Dimensions in Leadership*, which defines ethical leaders as those primarily motivated by a concern for others (altruistic motivation), who are strong and virtuous, trustworthy, supportive and nurturing. While their findings and conclusions are heavily linked to transformational leadership, an original contribution to the literature here is an examination of not just leader characteristics (traits/values) and influence strategies, but also the leader’s own motivations or intentions (altruistic intent and self-development). In the three dimensions model of ethical leadership, Kanungo (2001) and Mendonca (2001) link these intentions to a transformational leader’s organic worldview through a deontological perspective and argue that a key differentiator of ethical leadership is a leader’s genuine or moral altruistic motive — a manifestation of the leader’s helping concern for others, prompted by a sense of duty toward others without any regard for self-interest (as opposed to egotistic intent).

While lacking the dimension of intent, Aronson (2001) put forth a model of ethical leadership which relates to the leader’s moral development and leadership style (directive, transactional and transformational) arguing that leaders with higher moral development and who score high on transformational leadership styles are “genuinely transformational”, as they “are guided by altruistic values, attempt to influence subordinates through empowerment rather than control, and strive to develop their own virtues” (p. 253). Of primary importance in assessing successful ethical leadership therefore, are follower’s perceptions of leader intent. In response to a perceived measurement gap in this regard, Craig & Gustafson (1998) developed and empirically validated a Perceived Leader Integrity Scale (PLIS) and concluded that follower perceptions about a leader’s ethical integrity are strongly related to subordinate job satisfaction and intent to leave their jobs. Unfortunately, no attempt was made to correlate or discriminate this scale to the moral/ethical component of transformational leadership measured through the MLQ, which remains the most widely accepted leadership assessment survey in use today.

**Servant leadership**

Although the concept of servant leadership was first introduced by Greenleaf in 1977, the construct has seen a resurgence of interest with 14 academic articles appearing in the last 10 years. Most of these publications attempt to advance discussion of servant leadership by operationalizing dimensions of the theory, developing scales, empirically testing relationships and establishing distinctions from other PFL. As such, almost half of the articles are empirical in nature. Unfortunately, none of the articles on servant leadership appeared in major publications, but rather have almost exclusively been discussed in smaller journals such as *Leadership and Organizational Development*. In addition to the lack of theoretical underpinnings, an observed difficulty with the discourse on this topic relates to the methodologies used in the empirical studies. These points are discussed below.

Greenleaf (1977) described the servant leader as one that has a calling to serve others above all else which then leads one to aspire to lead. Key leader abilities include: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people and community building. The true test of servant leadership is if those who are served “grow as persons; do they while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?” (Spears, 1995).

A number of articles have attempted to build more theoretical foundations for Greenleaf’s
definition by examining philosophical origins (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002) and operationalizing specific leader attributes such as vision, honesty, integrity and trust (Joseph & Winston, 2005; Washington et al., 2006) as well as service, modeling, pioneering, appreciation of others and empowerment (Farling et al., 1999; Russell, 2000; Russell & Stone, 2002). The empirical studies to date have focused on scale development and testing (Denis & Winston, 2003; Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005; Washington et al., 2006) although these studies are plagued with methodological issues including the use of convenience samples. Most of the studies focus on leader values/attributes vs. measuring organizational outcomes.

Perhaps the best empirical tests to date looked across various different leadership scales to assess measures of reliability, convergent, divergent and predictive validity between an independently developed servant leadership questionnaire and the more widely accepted MLQ and LMX-7 (Leader-Member Exchange survey). Results showed positive correlations between servant leadership and transformational leadership, however, concluded that low effect sizes indicated that each measure was capturing different leadership phenomena (Barbutto & Wheeler, 2006). This study also isolated 5 of the 11 potential servant leader characteristics as conceptually and empirically distinct from transformational leadership or LMX – altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping and organizational stewardship.

Other Positive Forms of Leadership

Other leadership theories which could be included under the larger umbrella of PFL include: prosocial leadership (Lorenzi, 2004), responsible leadership (Lynham & Chermack, 2006), transcendental leadership (Sanders, 2003), primal leadership (Goleman et al., 2002) and Level 5 Leadership (Collins, 2001) to name just a few. However, for the most part, these theories have been put forth in practitioner-oriented publications or books and are therefore difficult to assess from a theoretical underpinning and methodological rigor perspective. Many have conceptual overlaps with other theories (transcendental and spiritual, Level 5 and authentic) and, in general, are believed to be further evidence of the historical context that is calling for more positive forms of leadership. However, a full review of practitioner books was deemed outside the scope of this paper and these PFL are therefore not discussed herein.

Comparison of Positive Forms of Leadership

In general, there has been little work done to isolate the conceptual distinctions between the different PFL constructs (Cooper et al., 2005; Fry 2003; Dent, 2005). While many papers acknowledge their relationship to transformational and/or charismatic leadership models (again, providing support that these forms are being used as baseline models in contemporary research), only a few articles directly attempt to isolate areas of convergence and divergence between one or more of the PFL. Both Stone et al. (2004) and Smith et al. (2004) focused on the difference between servant leadership and transformational leadership. Stone et al. (2004) found that although there was considerable overlap in common leadership attributes (influence, vision, trust, respect, credibility, risk taking, integrity and modeling), servant leaders and transformational leaders differed with respect to leader focus. Transformational leaders are focused on organizational objectives and building follower commitment to organizational objectives, while servant leaders are focused on developing the followers themselves. This is an interesting distinction and it could have fairly dramatic implications for future research in strategy and general management. By claiming that servant leaders subordinate organizational outcomes to follower development without linking the theory to long term gains, few managers are apt to want to adopt this leadership style given implicit financial responsibility to shareholders.

Smith and al. (2004) also attempt to differentiate servant leadership from transformational leadership by suggesting that the two leadership styles (although very similar) lead to different
organizational cultures - servant leadership leads to a spiritual generative culture and transformational leadership leads to an empowered dynamic organizational culture. Unfortunately, little theoretical or empirical development regarding how these organizational cultures may differ from each other was presented.

In developing his model for spiritual leadership, Fry (2003) claims that the explicit discussion of cultural values, follower needs and organizational effectiveness in spiritual leadership theory is distinct from other leadership models, which only touch on these factors implicitly. Further, he argues that the lack of specificity regarding leadership dimensions between models (i.e.: charismatic leadership dimensions include: vision, sensitivity to member’s needs, displaying unconventional behavior and taking personal risk vs. spiritual leadership dimensions which include: vision, altruistic love and hope/faith) has resulted in empirical studies that have diffused rather than focused theory building in positive forms of leadership.

Perhaps the best attempt at differentiating the various PFL from each other is Avolio and Gardner’s introduction to the Special Issue of Leadership Quarterly on authentic leadership (2005). However, although they present an excellent comparison of authentic leadership with transformational, charismatic, servant and spiritual leadership theories, rather than identifying distinctive characteristics of authentic leaders, the authors appear to have presented proof of significant similarities between the constructs. In fact, the only components that are identified as unique to authentic leadership development theory are the emotional contagion of authentic leadership behaviors and a focus on veritable organizational performance (both of which can actually be argued to be implicitly discussed in other PFL). All other components, from positive psychological capital to leader self-awareness and regulation, are either focal components of other PFL or discussed within the theories. Ironically, the article concludes with the statement that “if authentic leadership over time is shown simply as highlighting the processes nested in more traditional models of leadership such as ethical or transformational, then emerging theory in this area would have served to enhance the importance of self-awareness in explaining the highest forms and impact of leadership on sustained, veritable performance” (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

Discussion

Are these PFL then conceptually and empirically distinct from one another, as well as from transformational leadership? While the aforementioned discussion should have pointed to overwhelming similarity within the various PFL, two important and critical differences emerge between PFL and traditional leadership models: leader intent and a focus on organizational outcomes. These characteristics are examined below within an integrative leadership framework along the following dimensions: leader attributes/values, leader behaviors, leader intentions, follower outcomes and organizational outcomes.

1) Leader attributes/values: This is perhaps the area with the greatest conceptual overlap between all forms of PFL. The attributes measured as part of the Idealized Influence and Inspirational Motivation dimensions of transformational leaders include: admired, respected, trusted, enthusiastic and optimistic (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Certainly, spiritual and servant leadership theories include leader attributes of trust and respect, as do authentic and ethical leadership theories. Enthusiasm and optimism are key to charismatic and authentic leadership as well. In addition, the authentic leader is “confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, transparent, moral/ethical and future-oriented” (Luthans & Avolio, 2003), many of which are also values attributed to spiritual leaders, although perhaps labeled slightly differently. For example, Kriger & Seng (2005) identify honesty, integrity, humility, patience and peacefulness amongst others as spiritual leader values. Further, functional attributes of hope/faith such as endurance and perseverance, which are linguistically equivalent to the notion of resilience, are also discussed. As such, I
would argue that from a leader attribute/value perspective, the many types of PFL are actually
conceptually equivalent and future empirical research into the distinctions between the various PFL leader
attributes/values is likely to be more an exercise in semantics than to result in significant advances in
theory.

2) Leader behaviors: Articulating a compelling vision is a key behavior associated with both
transformational and charismatic leadership as well as all PFL theories. Positive modeling (leading by
example) and creating positive social exchanges (e.g.: reciprocity, encouragement, unbiased processing)
are further similarities. Transformational leaders are also said to act ethically and consistently in line with
their underlying principles and values as measured by the statement “considers the moral/ethical
consequences of decisions” (Avolio & Bass, 2004: MLQ 5X, p. 97). This is obviously analogous to
behaviors reviewed in both the ethical leadership literature (Kanungo & Mendonca, 1996), as well as the
spiritual (Fry, 2003) and servant leadership literature (Spears, 1995). The idea of consistency between
one’s words and one’s actions is also analogous to the authentic leadership tenet of acting in accordance
with one’s true self through relational transparency (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

As measured by the MLQ (Avolio & Bass, 2004), transformational leaders, however, also
provide Intellectual Stimulation and Individual Consideration which are not explicitly discussed concepts
in other PFL. While developing follower’s capabilities is deemed a priority for authentic leaders, the
leader may not actually be actively setting out to transform the follower into a leader, but may be doing so
simply by acting as a role model for followers (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Similarly, modeling behaviors
such as listening, empathy, healing and awareness is likely to be the mechanism by which followers of
servant leaders grow more autonomous and more likely to become servants themselves (Joseph &
Winston, 2005). Spiritual leaders are also said to exhibit behaviors such as forgiveness, kindness,
patience and courage (Reave, 2005). Given the above discussion, further conceptual clarity is needed to
distinguish how PFL behaviors specifically differ from the transformational leader behaviors.

3) Leader intentions: Antecedents to charismatic leadership behaviors have primarily been
focused on a leader’s need for power (Howell, 1998). Transformational leadership, on the other hand,
stops short of addressing the source of the leader’s own motivation (Fry, 2003: Reave, 2005). Although
sources of transformational leaders’ commitment have been discussed (as conscience and internalized
values) (Bass & Steidlmeir, 1999), these have not been incorporated into the theoretical model of
transformational leadership itself. As such, while transformational leaders are said to consider followers’
needs over their own needs, this dimension is actually operationalized on the MLQ on a 5 point scale as to
whether the leader “goes beyond self-interest for the good of the group” (Avolio & Bass, 2004). This is
quite different from the theory of ethical leader motivation put forth by Kanungo and Mendonca (1996,
2001) which identifies the altruistic concern of leaders as manifest by a sense of duty towards others. This
is also conceptually distinct from the servant leadership tenet that leaders place the desire to serve above
all else (Greenleaf, 1977). The authentic leader by definition acts according to the dictum - “to thine own
self be true” (Novicevic et al., 2006). As such, their intent lies in acting consistently with inner thoughts
and feelings. Although spiritual leadership identifies calling and membership as follower needs (Fry,
2005), these could also be argued to be the source of the leader’s own intrinsic motivations. Given that
positive leader intentions (vs. power or achievement motivations) appear to be unique to PFL, this area
should be a fruitful source of future research.

4) Follower outcomes (dyad/group): For the most part, causal models developed within the PFL
defined positive follower outcomes as some combination of increased measures of commitment, job
satisfaction, empowerment and task engagement as well as job performance and extra effort (Avolio et
al., 2004). This traces back to the original definition of successful leader outcomes as measured in the
MLQ as: follower extra effort (i.e.: “increases my willingness to try harder”) and effectiveness (i.e.: “is
effective in meeting my job-related needs”) (Avolio & Bass, 2004). While spiritual leadership is said to
lead to positive organizational commitment and productivity (i.e.: members will “do what it takes” in pursuit of the vision to continuously improve and be more productive”) (Fry, 2003), other PFL such as ethical leadership and servant leadership are less specific as to how these leadership styles differ from theories of extra effort and effectiveness. The transformational leadership literature is now overwhelmed by a wealth of empirical research (Yammarino et al., 2002) into the effects of this leadership style on various follower performance attributes (including discussions of mediators and moderators). Unless significant distinctions can be drawn between follower outcomes at the dyad/group level between PFL and transformational leadership outcomes, further empirical testing on this front is likely only to replicate previous findings as associated with transformational leadership.

5) Organizational outcomes: Traditional leadership theories operationalize “performance beyond expectations” at the dyad or group level as measured by follower extra effort and effectiveness discussed above (Beyer, 1999). However, although very little research has been done within PFL, these theories appear to perceive sustained performance beyond expectations as occurring at the organizational or even societal level. Authentic leadership theory, for example, includes financial, human, social and psychological capital returns to the definition of sustained performance (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). In addition, the theory includes the term “veritable” within the definition of performance to account for the genuine and ethical values used in obtaining this sustained performance and growth (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). However, to date, other than emotional contagion (Norman et al., 2005) and developing resiliency (Youssef & Luthans, 2005), the theory does not provide an adequate explanation regarding how authentic leadership delivers organizational level outcomes such as market performance or strategic competitive advantage. Ethical leadership theory also postulates that the three dimensions of ethical leadership (leader’s motives/intention, influence strategy and character) will best serve organizational and societal interests (Mendonca, 2001), and some studies of spirituality at work refer to positive organizational outcomes such as OCB and corporate reputation and image effects (Reave, 2005), however, the causal links between specific PFL and organizational-level outcomes remain untested. Qualitative research into PFL-run organizations combined with quantitative data on organizational level performance would greatly advance research in this area.

Given the above analysis, authentic, spiritual, ethical and servant leadership can be considered largely analogous constructs, likely to face discriminant validity issues both amongst themselves as well as the with the new traditional leadership theories (Cooper et al., 2005). In fact, along the dimensions of leader attributes/values, behaviors and follower outcomes, PFL as a group do not appear to add any particularly new explanatory power to the more traditional leadership models. However, two dimensions of all PFL - leader intent and organizational outcomes - do appear to be conceptually distinct from transformational or charismatic leadership theories. I therefore propose the following:

**Proposition 1:** Authentic, spiritual, ethical and servant leaders have positive intrinsic motivations that are conceptually distinct from the power, achievement or affiliation motivations of transformational and charismatic leaders.

**Proposition 2:** Given the difference in leader intent, positive forms of leadership have positive effects beyond the dyad/group level that positively influence organizational level outcomes.

Building on the Augmented Model of Transactional and Transformational leadership put forth by Bass & Avolio (MLQ 2004), I therefore propose a third level and additional extension to the original model that incorporates both these dimensions. The original model of transformational leadership is depicted within the grey boxes below, with the PFL contribution – model augmentation and extension - in white:
Limitations and Directions for Future Research

While every attempt was made to mirror the original Yammarino et al., 2005 study of leadership styles, some exceptions were made with regards to the exclusion of academic-written (although not peer-edited) books which could not be adequately reviewed at this stage. As such, although it is believed to be comprehensive, the empirical literature review can not be said to be exhaustive. Further, studies published in other disciplines (i.e.: health, education) were also not included, nor were recent doctoral dissertations or conference papers. However, all of these sources were found to have extensive publications on various PFL and would therefore only serve to provide further support for the growing interest in these leadership forms.

The most fruitful area for future research is likely to be within measuring and relating leader intentions to positive organizational outcomes. These would likely first have to be tested for correlation with transformational leadership behaviors and dyad/group level results as measured by the MLQ, and eventually with empirical tests of the PFL model with positive outcomes at the firm level. The latter would also benefit from support through rich descriptions and qualitative research into organizations that have self-identified themselves as authentic, spiritual, ethical or servant-led companies (e.g.: Medtronic, Life-is-Good).

Given the formative nature of the field, there has been a minimum amount of theory development or empirical research into gender, ethnic or cultural variations within PFL. The issue of gender and authentic leadership was explored in only one paper finding that women and other outsiders would require additional legitimating behaviors over and above “just being themselves” to be perceived as authentic leaders (Eagly, 2005). Further, the role of the organizational, environmental or situational contexts in PFL theories are also largely absent (see Gardner et al, 2005 for an exception). The integrated and augmented model of PFL proposed therefore also suffers from these same limitations. Future research into contextual requirements necessary to support PFL is warranted.

The leadership field as a whole also suffers from level-of-analysis issues – where individual, dyad, group or organizational level theory formulation, measurement, data analysis, and inference
drawing is not made explicit (Yammarino et al., 2002; 2005) – which are likely to continue to plague PFL as well, given that most of the forms explicitly propose multi-dimensional and multi-level constructs (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Criticisms with regards to other measurement issues such as time span of studies and sample selection can also be expected.

There is also the more philosophical debate as to whether or not measuring PFL with organizational level outcomes is counter-intuitive to the very objectives of PFL-lead companies (Benefiel, 2005). For example, if servant and ethical leaders are proposed to serve others first and, by doing so, may actually subjugate short-term organizational performance, should these PFL even be subjected to financial or other firm-level outcomes? Measuring PFL in the workplace may seem paradoxical considering that PFL implicitly include non-materialistic measurements of value. However, in order for PFL to gain legitimacy and move into Phase II of construct development (Reichers & Schneider, 1990), I would argue that these positive forms of leadership have to be linked to some operationalization of organizational level outcomes.

Conclusion

Taken as a group then, it has been argued here that authentic, spiritual, ethical and servant leadership deserve their own category amongst the other “classical”, “contemporary”, “alternative” and “new wave” forms of leadership discussed in Yammarino et al.’s original 2005 status of the field. This new, integrated category has been labeled herein - Positive Forms of Leadership (PFL) and shown to be conceptually distinct from more traditional forms of leadership through the dimensions of leader intent and focus on organizational outcomes. Individually, these positive forms of leadership have had more published than 40% of the 17 leadership approaches in the original study (including Path-Goal Theory and Participative Leadership). Together, the 61 PFL articles reviewed would represent the 3rd largest leadership group studied within the last decade, just behind transformational and charismatic leadership and well ahead of the 48 articles written on Leader-Member Exchange.

As such, the contribution of this paper lies not only with the empirical literature review of the field, documenting the emergence and popularity of these constructs, but also with the development of an integrative framework which allows for comparisons between PFL and with more traditional forms of leadership. An augmented and expanded model of PFL, which builds on transformational leadership values/attributes, behaviors and follower outcomes, but isolates positive leader intentions as the source for veritable, sustained performance at the organizational level has also been presented. Testable propositions and directions for future research were also discussed.
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1 Items marked with [*] were not part of the empirical literature review on PFLs


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