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COACHING AS SERVANT LEADERSHIP: APPLYING THE SOCIAL CHANGE  
MODEL OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TO  
YOUTH BASKETBALL PROGRAMS

BRADY FRITCHER

87 Pages

This paper presents an original interpretation of the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (SCM) in order to provide youth basketball coaches with a tool for practicing and teaching servant leadership principles in their program. Because scholars and coaches both have a long tradition of borrowing leadership styles from other areas of study, adapting them, and examining their potential applicability to sport (Westre, 2003), many youth basketball coaches use servant leadership theory to inform their approach to coaching. While this is sufficient for coaching philosophy development, Robert Greenleaf (1977) did not identify the specific skills that define servant leaders, nor did he provide a standard model for putting his theory into practice and teaching its principles to others. As a result, many coaches who want to use his theory to inform their practice have difficulty doing so, as there is no model available for implementing it in a youth sport context. The author argues that SCM is a reasonable model for actualizing the goals and principles of servant leadership theory given the value each framework places on (a) contributing to the individual growth of others, (b) highlighting the connection between individual, community, and society, and (c) creating positive social change. Then, based on the suggestion that curricular leadership development models can be effectively adapted for use in extracurricular contexts (Sherman et al., 2017), the author adapts SCM for use in a youth

basketball program. Ideally, this research will empower youth basketball coaches to use the game as a platform for teaching young people the values, skills, and competencies needed to build and sustain a more just, equitable, and inclusive society.

**KEYWORDS:** SCM, servant leadership, leadership development, youth sports, basketball

COACHING AS SERVANT LEADERSHIP: APPLYING THE SOCIAL CHANGE  
MODEL OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TO  
YOUTH BASKETBALL PROGRAMS

BRADY FRITCHER

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

School of Communication

Illinois State University

2023

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MODEL OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TO  
YOUTH BASKETBALL PROGRAMS

BRADY FRITCHER

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*I would like to thank my family for empowering me to pursue my interests; those who have exposed me to the true power of education; and every coach, teammate, and friend who has changed my life through the game of basketball.*

B.F.

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The whole thing is about diversity and embracing the different things within cultures that separate us but actually tie us [together].

–Ali Shaheed Muhammad, *Beats, Rhymes & Life:*

*The Travels of A Tribe Called Quest*

After graduating from Illinois State University in 2019, I spent one year as a college basketball coach. I had dedicated several years to pursuing that career path and was ultimately able to put myself in a great position with one of the best junior college programs in the nation. However, I quickly ended up losing my way—I was young and immature, so I lost sight of why I wanted to become a coach in the first place, which was to help young people grow. I became a coach because I was so fortunate as a young person to have coaches in my life who used the game as a platform for teaching me life lessons, and I wanted to do the same thing for other kids. During my first season as a full-time coach, I began to realize that I was in it for the wrong reasons; I was coaching to fulfill my own ego, to impress others, and to move up in the coaching ranks rather than focusing on serving the needs of the athletes who I was responsible for developing. As a result, I was more on edge than usual, which negatively impacted my ability to connect with them and significantly reduced the amount of joy I derived from my involvement with the game. It was at this point that I decided to quit coaching—not forever, but I knew I needed to learn more; I needed a tool or a framework to help me use the game of basketball as a medium for contributing to the lives of young people in a positive way.

Because I needed a full reorientation of the way I understood my role as a coach and as a leader, I chose to explore the literature on servant leadership theory (Greenleaf, 1977). I was familiar with this theory from my undergraduate experience, and I knew that it advocated for

serving the needs of others and prioritizing the wellbeing of each individual, the group, and the society over the self—which is exactly how I wanted to approach coaching basketball. To me, coaching basketball—particularly at the youth level, which is the level I intend to coach at in the future—is less about winning games and more about identifying and exploiting the opportunities for life skill development that are inherent within it. By “youth” basketball, I mean adult-organized basketball programs for children, typically between the ages of 7 and 18 years which have designated coaches, organized practices, and scheduled competitions (Feltz, 2001). Therefore, I wanted to understand how I might use servant leadership to inform my efforts to accomplish this.

Servant leadership was first recognized as an organizational management theory in 1977 when Robert K. Greenleaf, a longtime employee and executive at AT&T, published his groundbreaking work *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (1977). In this text, Greenleaf identifies the servant-leader as servant first; as an individual who is driven to lead by, among other things, (a) their desire to make a positive difference in the lives of their followers through service and (b) their desire to make positive contributions to society. Essentially, servant leadership “emphasizes increased service to others; a holistic approach to work; promoting a sense of community; and sharing of power in decision-making” (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 6). While this theory was initially developed for use in an organizational management setting, it has since been applied to various other contexts due to the broad applicability of its principles. Two such contexts that are directly relevant to this project are education and coaching.

Scholars and practitioners (i.e., teachers, professors, or any other group responsible for the formal education of young people) regularly use servant leadership principles to inform their

educational philosophies with an end goal of using the classroom as a platform for serving the common good. Because servant leaders have a desire to positively influence the lives of their followers and make positive contributions to society, education is a natural fit for implementing Greenleaf's ideas, as education is a powerful platform that can be used to develop youth in a positive way and inspire social change. Educators who use these principles to shape their philosophy not only practice the act of servant leadership themselves, but they also model for students what it means to be a servant leader by making positive contributions to the lives of others through service. Greenleaf (1977) himself understood that the principles of his theory were a natural fit for education, a connection he alluded to in the fifth chapter of his seminal text, titled "Servant Leadership in Education" (pp. 163-201).

Some scholars have suggested that teaching and coaching are in need of closer connection due to the belief that educational research can help to further develop understanding about coaching, as it is a related field from which both academics and practitioners can benefit (Armour, 2010; Nelson et al., 2014; Penney, 2006). As a result, servant leadership theory has also been regularly applied and studied in the area of sports coaching (Peachey & Burton, 2017). Coaches—particularly at the youth level where individual development can justifiably be prioritized over winning games—often use servant leadership as a lens through which to develop their coaching philosophy, which can result in a coach who serves athletes by empowering them to use the values, skills, and competencies learned through sports participation to make positive contributions to society. However, those who want to practice and teach servant leadership in their program are faced with a problem; there is no standard model for developing in youth athletes the skills and competencies needed to be a servant leader. While I found some examples of servant leadership being used by coaches to inform their philosophy throughout my research

process, I did not locate any models that were developed specifically to implement this theory in a sports program.

This is largely because Robert Greenleaf never provided an explicit definition of what servant leadership is or what skills and behaviors define servant leaders, nor did he provide a specific model or tool for implementing his theory (Westre, 2003; Westre, 2008). So, while many coaches agree that his ideas and values are great for informing their philosophy, one of the biggest complaints about servant leadership theory is that there is no model for actually putting Greenleaf's principles into practice; that it's too abstract and idealistic. When considering how I might practice servant leadership as a youth basketball coach, I realized how this might present a problem—it is hard to develop a program that results in the achievement of servant leadership values and skills if I do not know what value and skills participants should develop as a result of the experience. Therefore, rather than attempt to build a model from scratch to help me implement servant leadership theory, I set out to find an explicit leadership development model that not only aligns with Greenleaf's principles, but also has the potential to be adapted for use in a youth basketball program. One model that aligns with the principles of servant leadership theory is the Social Change Model of Leadership Development, or SCM.

SCM was developed by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) in 1996 and focuses on leadership as a nonhierarchical, complex, distributed process that engages values exploration (HERI, 1996). This model has been widely used among several generations of college students and created change agents with a greater commitment to seeing social change as an objective of leadership (Harper & Kezar, 2021). Leadership, as framed by the Social Change Model, is “explicitly engaged in furthering social equality, democracy, and justice” (Harper & Kezar, 2021, p. 156). To develop leaders that are properly equipped to advance social equality,

democracy, and justice, SCM highlights the development of seven particular skills, or as they are called in the model, the “7 Cs”: consciousness of self, congruence, commitment, collaboration, common purpose, controversy with civility, and citizenship (HERI, 1996). There is also an unofficial 8<sup>th</sup> “C”—change—which is the value hub around which the entire model was developed. The group responsible for the development of SCM—The Working Ensemble—suggested that learning and practicing the “7 Cs” would empower young people to create positive social change.

In line with SCM, I interpret leadership as a shared, collaborative act that is explicitly engaged in furthering social equality, democracy, and justice (Harper & Kezar, 2021). I want to use youth basketball as a platform to not only teach young people that this is the ultimate goal of effective leadership, but also to provide them with the skills and competencies needed to achieve such lofty outcomes. Again, this paper is not about winning basketball games or building better jump shots—the goal is to empower coaches to use the game of basketball as a platform for teaching youth athletes the values, skills, and competencies needed to become the types of leaders that are equipped to fulfill the potential of our democracy.

I argue that SCM aligns with the principles of servant leadership theory given that both are focused on (1) contributing to the individual growth of others, (2) emphasizing the connection between individual, community, and society, and (3) creating positive social change. While SCM has been shown to be effective toward this end in educational settings, no research to date has attempted to apply it to coaching youth sports. Additionally, no research has ever recognized the similarities and potential for collaboration between SCM and servant leadership theory. While it is true that SCM was developed specifically for college classrooms, it was not necessarily developed *only* for college classrooms; rather, it was developed for this context based

on the belief that colleges and universities were distinctive environments where values such as collaboration and common purpose were critical to the overall function of the institution, and thus, important to students interested in becoming leaders for social change (Harper & Kezar, 2021). While colleges and universities are a suitable context for developing leaders interested in positive social change, they are not the only environments where collaboration and common purpose are critical to the overall function of the institution. Another context in which these processes are vital is youth basketball, and thankfully, there is a significant body of research dedicated to justifying the use of youth sports as a medium for leadership development.

For example, Danish et al. (2005) suggest that schools offer a particularly attractive environment in which to practice sport and intentionally coach life skills given that it is where youth are most accessible, and coaches who work to coach life skills in this setting can contribute to the educational mission of schools. In a comprehensive review of leadership development literature, Holt et al. (2017) noted that sports participation among young people is important for the development of life skills such as teamwork, leadership, problem solving, time management, and communication skills. A similar review by Opstoel et al. (2019) illustrated that sports participation is associated with the personal and social development of young people. Further, Spruit et al. (2018) suggested that participating in sports is one of the best ways to develop moral behaviors among youth. In sum, these findings provide strong evidence of the positive results associated with youth sports participation and justify the current attempt to use youth basketball as a medium for leadership development.

If youth sports are a suitable environment for developing leadership skills in young people, scholars and coaches should exploit that potential by applying the most effective curricular leadership development models to youth sports programs (Sherman et al., 2017).

However, Gould and Carson (2008) posit that one limitation of current research is that sport is often described as a single entity, and we should therefore be more context-specific in order to capture and appropriately explain how youth development occurs in specific sport settings—which, in conjunction with my personal interests and experience, is why I have chosen to focus on youth basketball programs. The purpose of this paper, then, is to provide youth basketball coaches with an explicit leadership development model which they can use to practice servant leadership principles in their program by teaching participants the values, skills, and competencies needed to build and sustain a more just, equitable, and inclusive society.

This will serve as a response to scholars who have suggested that the fields of teaching and coaching are in need of closer connection due to the belief that educational research can help to further develop understanding about coaching, as it is a related field from which both academics and coaches can benefit (Armour, 2010; Nelson et al., 2014; Penney, 2006). It will also serve to further integrate the fields of communication studies and leadership development, which have become increasingly connected in recent years. As noted by Cunningham et al. (2020), there is significant potential for collaboration between communication and leadership scholars, and if we continue to understand the relationship between communication theory, leadership development efforts, and the achievement of societal goals, we can work toward more just communities.

Ideally, then, this paper will provide youth basketball coaches with an explicit leadership development model that will empower them to actually implement, practice, and teach the principles and values of servant leadership theory in their program rather than just using those ideas to inform their coaching philosophy in an abstract way. Today's youth are arguably more inspired than ever to become servant leaders in order to fulfill the potential of our democracy,



whether that is through community service, local politics, activism, or any other civic engagement activity that might empower them to positively impact the lives of others. I argue that it is the responsibility of coaches, scholars, and educators to provide them with the values, skills, and competencies needed to capitalize on that motivation; that is why I feel so passionately about using the game of basketball as a platform for youth leadership development, and that is why I conducted this research.

### **Preview**

To begin, this paper will justify the study of leadership development from a communication perspective by reviewing a body of literature that (a) explores how leadership development has been studied in academic (i.e., curricular) settings, (b) details the inherent communicative elements of leadership and leadership development, and (c) describes how leadership development is situated within the field of communication studies in order to provide readers with a basic understanding of the interrelatedness between these two areas of study. For example, Ruben et al. (2018) studied the communicative implications of a program that was developed to instill leadership skills in graduate students interested in higher education leadership. Some of the themes that emerged from their analysis included a deeper awareness of and appreciation for communication, a more nuanced understanding of the challenges facing institutions of higher education, and the ability to learn about leadership and communication through interactive group exercises and mentorship (Ruben et al., 2018). Participants in this study not only developed an increased awareness of the need for effective communication skills as a result of their participation in a leadership development program, but they also developed a better understanding of what skills are needed to lead higher education institutions *and* increased their capacity to learn about those skills through structured group activities. Similarly, in a study

that sought to develop leadership exploration skills in university students, participants shared signs of growth through reflection of their leadership development, cultural intelligence, emotional intelligence, and communication skills (Volpe et al., 2016). Here, active reflection, awareness, and development of one's own communication skills was shown to increase growth as it relates to leadership development. Additionally, Cunningham et al. (2020) provide a general overview of the field of leadership studies and how, in recent years, we have witnessed its increased integration with the discipline of communication studies. This section will efficiently justify further analysis of leadership development as a communicative phenomenon.

While it is important to highlight the intersectionality between leadership development and communication studies, the majority of research conducted at this intersection has taken place in curricular settings (Beaty et al., 2021; Haber-Curran & GuramatunhuCooper, 2020; Haddad et al., 2017). However, there is a select group of scholars who are primarily interested in developing leadership competencies in *extracurricular* activities—a body of research that will be covered in the following chapter. For example, Sherif (2019) argues that since adolescents learn greatly in diverse environments, leadership educators should imbue the theory of leadership development with practical situations which can be created during service learning, in the classroom, or at any extracurricular event. Relatedly, he argues that we should strive to generate leadership models that are more context-sensitive and responsive to various learning environments and youth populations (Sherif, 2019). One extracurricular context that is particularly fitting for further integration with leadership development research is youth sports.

Youth sports provide participants with a structured group setting in which they can apply the leadership skills they learn, as opposed to simply reading about them or discussing them in abstract ways (Bean et al., 2020). This not only increases one's capacity for learning, but also

increases the likelihood that they will apply what they learn to other, non-athletic contexts—a concept commonly referred to as “life skills transfer” (Pierce et al., 2017). Therefore, the next chapter will describe how youth sports serve as a sort of “leadership laboratory” in which athletes not only learn about effective leadership skills but are also provided with regular opportunities to apply those skills in a structured group setting under the guidance of a trusted adult—which also increases the likelihood of transfer.

Applying educational research to extracurricular contexts is justified by the realization that coaching has more to do with teaching (and subsequent learning) than anything else, which suggests that educational research can help further develop our understanding about coaching, as it is a related field from which coaches, academics, and practitioners can all benefit (Nelson et al., 2014). Therefore, the next chapter will provide an overview of a theory common to education studies—servant leadership theory—to show how it has been used in the field of education, and also how it has been utilized by sports coaches for similar educational and developmental purposes. While servant leadership offers coaches a particularly attractive lens through which to develop their coaching philosophy, it does not provide them with a model for leadership development, nor does it describe the specific skills or learning outcomes that servant leadership should create. One model that does provide a specific set of leadership skills and learning outcomes that closely align with the principles of servant leadership theory is SCM.

According to The Working Ensemble, a leader is not necessarily a person who holds some formal position of leadership or who is perceived as a leader by others; rather, a leader is regarded as one who is able to effect positive change for the betterment of others, the community, and the society. All people, in other words, are potential leaders (HERI, 1996). Moreover, The Working Ensemble posits that the process of leadership cannot be described

simply in terms of the behavior of an individual; rather, leadership involves collaborative relationships that lead to collective action grounded in the shared values of people who work together to effect positive change (HERI, 1996). Given its emphasis on individual growth, the connection between the individual, the community, and the society, and its ultimate goal of creating positive change, SCM is a suitable model for practicing servant leadership and developing servant leaders in a youth basketball program. Therefore, the author will provide a thorough description of SCM, including when and why it was developed, what its creators hoped to achieve, and how it has been applied in curricular settings since its development.

Finally, the author will provide practical considerations for implementing SCM in a youth basketball program. Ideally, this research will empower youth basketball coaches to (a) practice servant leadership in their program, (b) provide more young people with the values, skills, and competencies needed to capitalize on their motivation to build a more just, equitable, and inclusive society, and (c) exploit the inherent potential of youth basketball as a medium for leadership development.

As Ricketts et al. (2008) argue, leadership educators have the considerable responsibility of providing future leaders with the education and experiences that will allow them to excel as leaders in a changing society. However, such education and experiences are not a focal point of America's primary education system. Thus, if our society and the challenges faced by those responsible for its maintenance are constantly changing, those responsible for developing young people should adapt our leadership development efforts in order to emphasize the values, skills, and competencies needed to overcome modern challenges. This paper shows how implementing SCM in a youth basketball program is one way to accomplish that.

## CHAPTER II: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AS COMMUNICATION

Communication is essential to leadership (Cunningham et al., 2020). As Ruben et al. (2018) state, leadership is enacted through verbal, nonverbal, and material modes; it is the mechanism through which leadership behaviors are displayed, conveyed, received, and interpreted, and the means through which leader-follower interactions take place. Leadership, therefore, is best understood through a communication lens—a common belief among scholars in several disciplines.

A comprehensive review of several definitions of leadership indicates that all recognize the importance of communication in the leadership process. In one review, leadership is defined as “an interactive process during which one or more individuals use symbols to influence other individuals to join with them in accomplishing change and realizing a shared objective” (Gamble & Gamble, 2013, p. 9). Similarly, Johnson and Hackman (2018) define leadership as “human (symbolic) communication that modifies the attitudes and behaviors of others in order to meet the shared group goals and needs” (p. 12). In further defense of the role of communication in effective leadership, Johansson (2018) writes that “any goal or common purpose needs to be verbalized, become known, be understood, and be accepted before anyone can act to accomplish it” (p. 1). Thus, it is clear and commonly agreed upon that leadership is an inherently communicative process.

Communication scholars who study leadership tend to look at how symbols, both verbal and nonverbal, serve as forms of communication that influence followers to accomplish their goals. In this way, communication becomes an essential aspect of effective leadership; leaders need to use a variety of communication skills to bring groups together (Johnson & Hackman,

2018). This communication can take many forms, including imagining a better future, identifying problems to be solved, and linking the past, present, and future (Cunningham et al., 2020). Further, both of these topics have become especially salient in a time of polarized political discourse, political unrest, persistent social inequalities, and uncertainty brought on by new realities. Thus, if we continue to understand how communication processes support communal goals, we can work toward more just communities (Cunningham et al., 2020).

This has inspired both scholars and practitioners to seek the best practices for developing leadership skills in young people in order to provide them with the tools needed to build and sustain more just, equitable, and inclusive communities. Konuk and Posner (2021) argue that society has a responsibility to guide, shape, and influence the next generation of leaders, with a most important obligation to help discover and release their untapped potential. Young people are vital because they “represent the future of every country, needing to be, among many desirable attributes, hopeful, entrepreneurial, and productive. To be best prepared to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow, they must develop leadership skills” (Konuk & Posner, 2021, p. 79). To this point, the majority of that research has focused on how to do so in academic—or curricular—contexts.

### **Leadership Development in Curricular Environments**

Leadership studies emerged from leadership research that was primarily conducted in the United States, with a focus on business culture and management. As the field matured, however, leadership studies became more interdisciplinary, encompassing the arts and humanities, social sciences, and applied fields (Cunningham et al., 2020). In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of leadership studies programs that are officially recognized as

academic fields of study. In fact, leadership development is not only common among most disciplines in higher education, but it also continues to grow in scope.

This increase in leadership development/leadership studies programs has resulted in various unique approaches to both program design and delivery (Martinez et al., 2020). The majority of these programs integrate a number of different educational models, including organizational leadership, social and civic engagement, and liberal arts more broadly (Cunningham et al., 2020). This increasingly social and civic engagement-minded approach to leadership development is marked by “increasing interconnectedness and engagement with different ways of knowing and being,” which “presents a crucial learning moment in which knowledge of people, places, things, and events is critical” (Haber-Curran & GuramatunhuCooper, 2020, p. 94).

It is the responsibility of educators and other leadership development practitioners to use this learning moment to prepare learners for the reality of living and working in a transitioning world. As Martinez et al. (2020) argue, the nation’s ability to respond and prosper will depend on the quality of leadership demonstrated at all levels of society. For this reason, higher education has embraced the opportunity to transform and develop the current generation of college students into future leaders of tomorrow. In other words, American higher education institutions are using the classroom as a platform for developing leadership skills and competencies in young people.

The increased call for more effective leaders, coupled with the increased academic interest in studying the best practices for leadership development, has situated leadership studies as a prominent area of study within the field of education. As Ruben et al. (2018) note, the need for more systematic approaches to leadership recruitment, preparation, and development is becoming increasingly apparent and a growing number of colleges, universities and other

associations are devoting increasing attention to both formal and informal leadership development.

For example, Beaty et al. (2021) explored how completing a curricular leadership studies program influenced students' leadership learning. The authors were interested in exploring how leadership learning in higher education contributed to students' success in career, life, and community. The findings from the study are consistent with previous research, which found that participating in academic leadership programs provides opportunities for students to reflect on their leadership learning, build relationships with the intention for collaboration as a part of the leadership process, and the significant benefits of learning across difference (Beaty et al, 2021).

In a different study, Clapham (2021) compared characterizations of successful leaders held by students enrolled in a college level leadership education program to those of students who did not participate in the program. As hypothesized, the results revealed significant differences between the conceptualizations held by students not enrolled in leadership coursework and students enrolled in leadership coursework. Non-leadership students rated successful leaders significantly higher on agentic and task-oriented characteristics than did leadership students, and they also rated successful leaders significantly lower on communal characteristics than did students graduating from a leadership program. Additionally, the pattern of characteristics endorsed by non-leadership students aligned with traditional hierarchical views of leadership (Clapham, 2021). In other words, this study showed that through intentional leadership development, educators can deconstruct traditional interpretations of leadership which view it as merely an assigned, hierarchical position. Curricular, theory-based leadership development programs therefore have the potential to emphasize the fact that communication



and collaboration skills are more vital to effective leadership than titles, positions, or assigned power.

Altering young people's perception of effective leadership is important because one's leadership development can be influenced by their perception of what the word "leadership" means (Landwehr & Lloyd, 2019). Landwehr and Lloyd (2019) posit that perceptions of leadership are an important element in the process of leader learning because perceptions of leadership greatly influence leadership attitudes and actions. Therefore, many scholars have encouraged leadership development practitioners to use perceptions of leadership as a starting point for organized leader development programs. In other words, most scholars agree that in order to teach someone about effective leadership, we must first ensure that they interpret leadership as a shared, collaborative activity rather than a form of assigned power that only a select few can practice. While the articles presented here are just a few examples of many, they are representative of the most common themes in curricular leadership development studies.

However, implementing effective leadership development programs in curricular environments has proven difficult for practitioners. As Volpe et al. (2016) note, educators are constantly challenged with how to best situate instructional and experiential opportunities to maximize student learning. This has caused many scholars to question whether the classroom is actually the most effective context for teaching leadership skills and competencies.

### **Criticisms of Curricular Leadership Development**

Ruben et al. (2018) recognize that creating and implementing effective leadership programming is not an easy task for administrators, particularly in higher education institutions due to the vast array of mission statements that leaders in those institutions must pursue simultaneously. The diverse array of professional, administrative, technical, and support

personnel in such institutions means that they are often interested in their own unique cultures, performance criteria, and incentive structures. These diverse and often conflicting views of the priority goals for institutions and their individual departments, in addition to the traditions of collegial decision-making and the numerous external stakeholders who often have their own unique views on the role and appropriate directions of our institutions, higher education is a notoriously difficult context in which to effectively implement leadership development programs.

Leadership development programs in curricular settings have also been criticized for not providing enough opportunities for skill application. Young people need opportunities where they can actually practice leadership skills and competencies, rather than simply learning about them in abstract ways. As Konuk and Posner (2021) argue, leadership development programs, unlike theoretical knowledge, should provide “actual leadership experience, a practice-based infrastructure, and hands-on learning activities” (p. 79). In the same study, these authors found that students introduced to leadership issues and given even some opportunity to practice them significantly increased their leadership in comparison to those students who did not have the same opportunity or experience (Konuk & Posner, 2021). Thus, it is commonly recognized and agreed upon that leadership development should occur in environments which provide opportunities for participants to learn through real, practical experience.

Faculty teaching leadership courses recognize the need for experiential learning, but often struggle to find meaningful and manageable learning opportunities (Andreu et al., 2019). Most educators agree that leadership—to some degree—can be taught, and that classroom instruction can play some part in guiding that learning, but nearly all also agree that classroom learning is insufficient and must be reinforced with experiential learning (Andreu et al., 2019).

Typically, this issue is bypassed by including case studies and case learning in academic programs. However, cases often lack the complexity and ambiguity of real-world leadership challenges, as there is often a “correct” conclusion to come to in case studies, and students are judged on whether or not they came to that pre-determined “best” solution. However, this is not viewed as effective leadership development by many scholars and practitioners, as leadership “is about challenging the status quo and pursuing change in response to dynamic environments, while cases are teaching students to apply extant knowledge to solve stable problems” (Andreu et al, 2019, p. 136). Thus, the authors of this study posit that cases are excellent tools for training technical skills, but insufficient for training leadership.

Further, case learning focuses on externalized challenges and does not enable students to examine their inner selves, which is a critical element in leadership education; self-exploration is an important and often overlooked element of leadership training within higher education (Andreu et al., 2019). When solving cases, students rarely, if ever, must rely on their personal value system, examine their morality, decide where and how to contribute their efforts, show empathy to those affected, live with consequences, or initiate a multitude of other leadership skills, which suggests that case learning falls short as an experiential methodology for leadership training (Andreu et al., 2019).

In other words, effective leadership education is a pedagogy of practice where students learn about leadership through doing; learning occurs where concepts meet experiences through reflection (Mintzberg & Gosling, 2002). As a result of their review, Andreu et al. (2019) conclude that leadership training requires finding opportunities for self-development, self-reflection, and the application of leadership skills—three opportunities which are not always readily available for students in a classroom setting.

Finally, while scholars recognize that higher education leadership development programming can benefit students, they also recognize that not everyone has equal access to these opportunities. Personal and institutional barriers prevent many young people from having access to these opportunities. As stated by Haddad et al. (2017), “at a time when the United States strives to promote equity and inclusion in postsecondary institutions...differential access to transformative leadership opportunities presents a major challenge” (p. 77). In response, scholars from various fields have begun to consider whether environments other than the classroom are more suitable for developing leadership skills in young people. One of the most commonly explored contexts in this regard is extracurricular activities.

### CHAPTER III: EXTRACURRICULAR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

In order to teach youth effective leadership skills and competencies, we must account for the immediate learning environment in which they are taught and objectively consider whether it is optimal for leadership development. Youth leadership must be developed in environments where skill development is encouraged through hands-on participation and by recognizing that youth experiences are transformed by the youth who participate in them (Kress, 2006). Youth leadership is therefore “viewed as a sum of experiences emerging as a result of adolescent personal transformation and decision-making” (Kress, 2006, p. 2).

Similar to Andreu et al. (2019), Landwehr and Lloyd (2019) argue that the most valuable experiences for youth seem to be experiences that they perceived were connected to leadership. In other words, to learn about leading, young people need to be doing something that they consider leadership; to learn about leading, they need to lead (Landwehr & Lloyd, 2019). Through active learning and purposeful engagement in learning activities, youth are more capable of processing, assimilating, and organizing information through application to specific learning activities, and are thus able to build new understanding independently from external assistance, even though learning is nourished by the learning environment (Sherif, 2019). Therefore, to foster positive youth attitudes towards leadership and formal leadership development, leadership educators can imbue the theory of leadership with practical situations. To reiterate, such situations can be created during service learning, in the classroom, or at any extracurricular event (Sherif, 2019).

Hancock et al. (2012) posit that young people often develop their skills and self-competencies through participation in extracurricular activities. The authors’ review of literature

showed that young people who participate in extracurricular activities have greater opportunities to build their leadership skills through positive, active, and constant support from adults in a mentoring culture. As the authors of this study also note, it is important that leadership educators can facilitate leadership skill development by providing youth with opportunities to practice their leadership skills in a safe environment with supportive adults. Extracurricular activities not only provide participants with opportunities for hands-on, experiential learning, but they also provide adults with a platform to create a safe and supportive environment for youth, all of which make extracurricular activities a fitting context for leadership development (Hancock et al., 2012).

Further, given their affiliation with schools, extracurricular activities provide opportunities for collaboration with school faculty and educators, which can encourage youth understanding of the importance of being a leader and the role leadership can play in learning and personal development. School administration and staff can become leadership role models for youth and exemplify leadership through their own actions (Sherif, 2019). Also, Landwehr and Lloyd (2019) found that personally known adults, rather than famous or unknown foreigners, are the main people of influence when it comes to youth leadership development. Personal relationships seem to be a key to having an effect on the leader development of the youth. Adults who care for young people, listen to them, encourage them, and support them are often spoken of as the greatest influence on the leader development of the youth. Therefore, Landwehr and Lloyd (2019) recommend that schools, churches, and community organizations be recognized as important contexts for developing young leaders.

By implementing explicit leadership development programs in extracurricular activities, we can inspire more youth to learn and practice these skills than if we only teach them in curricular environments. This is important because the engagement of more youth in leader

development may empower more youth to be part of positive change in their communities as youth and also as adults (Landwehr & Lloyd, 2019). Therefore, as Hancock et al. (2012) argue, youth should be encouraged to become involved in extracurricular activities to explore their individual potential as leaders. In these environments, adults should work with youth to help them learn how to understand themselves, communicate more effectively, improve interpersonal skills, manage their time, and work with groups (Hancock et al., 2012).

### **Examples of Leadership Development in Extracurricular Activities**

Martinez et al. (2020) examined students' experiences in study abroad and community service programs during college to understand how they influenced socially responsible leadership outcomes. Similar to past research, they found a relationship between students engaging in study abroad, community service, and the outcome of socially responsible leadership (Martinez et al., 2020). This study, which aimed to explore the best practices for developing leadership skills in young people outside of the classroom, showed that teaching leadership competencies in cocurricular or extracurricular activities allows students to engage with their community and utilize service-learning in ways a basic leadership education experience does not allow (Martinez et al., 2020).

In another example, Hancock et al. (2012) examined youth participation in sports, school, and community extracurricular activities to assess the influence of different involvement roles and adult support on leadership skills. The authors found that those who perceived their adult support more positively had more positive perceptions of their leadership skills, and also found that young peoples' perceptions towards their leadership skills are influenced by extracurricular activity involvement roles and the support of their parents and other adults (Hancock et al., 2012).

Finally, Rosch and Headrick (2020) explored the effectiveness of The Collegiate Leadership Competition (CLC) for achieving socially responsible leadership outcomes, which is a fast-growing tool for post-secondary student leadership development. In this competition, teams practice with a coach for several months, then compete against teams from other institutions to win competitions based on achieving outcomes and demonstrating effective leadership practices, such as authentic collaboration and positive conflict management techniques. Their findings, though initial, may indicate that placing students in competitive environments can serve as an important tool to support their leadership development (Rosch and Headrick, 2020). This is significant because there are several extracurricular activities that have competition inherently built into their structure, and competition has been shown to serve as “a spur for personal growth” (Rosch & Headrick, 2020, p. 2).

Motivation scholars have suggested that the drive for motivation is built into our brain and manifests itself through the drive to acquire, the drive to bond, the drive to comprehend, and the drive to defend—all of which are rewarded through inter-group competition (Rosch & Headrick, 2020). Competition, then, often strengthens learning and motivation. These findings suggest that including competition as an intentional pedagogy in educational programs dedicated to student leadership development has the potential to serve as a value-added benefit to educators.

The founders of the CLC stated that their focus was to create an environment in which students engage in “deliberate practice” of their skills to hone them for application in their own particular contexts. Deliberate practice occurs when the learner works with a coach who places the learner outside of their comfort zone to constantly try new things just beyond their current abilities to achieve well-defined goals, and then receive timely feedback for performance



improvement. In many leadership development programs—particularly those conducted in a curricular learning environment—such opportunities for deliberate practice may not occur as frequently as leadership educators may wish (Rosch & Headrick, 2020).

In other words, Rosch & Headrick (2020) not only recognize the need to provide more leadership development opportunities for young people through extracurricular activities, but they also recognize the benefit of placing learners in a competitive environment as it provides them with ample opportunity to practice their leadership skills rather than simply learning about them in an abstract way; competitive extracurricular activities provide participants with a context in which they can apply what they have learned. Therefore, those who want to equip more young people with the values, skills, and competencies needed to be a socially responsible leader can take advantage of extracurricular activities that inherently provide opportunities for competition—such as youth sports programs.

## CHAPTER IV: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN YOUTH SPORTS

Of all potential platforms for youth leadership development, sport appears to be one of the most underutilized (Gould and Voelker, 2010). Within the sport learning context, participants are exposed to a variety of elements that can improve one's ability to foster life skills in youth, such as unique training patterns and program designs centered around competition, regular opportunities for collaboration and social interaction, and coaches who are affiliated with schools and can thus support their educational mission (Gould & Carson, 2008; Pierce et al., 2017). Additionally, sport is highly valued in many societies, and is an activity that young people are highly motivated to pursue and where they believe their actions have important consequences (Gould & Voelker, 2010).

In a review of relevant literature, Weiss et al. (2016) state that considerable research has demonstrated that sport and physical activity contexts hold tremendous potential for providing the type of climate, coaching behaviors, and opportunities necessary for learning life skills and attaining positive developmental outcomes such as confidence, character, and leadership. This is partly because athletes tend to enjoy learning about leadership in a sport context: "Beyond participants' beliefs that sport was an ideal context for teaching life skills, several participants viewed the sport environment as being superior to other [program] contexts (i.e. church, clubs)," which "could be explained by youth seeing sport as both a distraction and escape from everyday stressors" (Jacobs & Wright, 2019, p. 92).

As Bean et al. (2020) note, sport is often described as a vehicle for promoting positive outcomes among youth, including the adoption of life skills. Similarly, Opstoel et al. (2019) found that available qualitative and quantitative evidence shows that participation in physical

education and sports yields benefits in terms of personal and social development. Turnnidge and Cote (2016) posit that engagement in quality sport programs that build on youth's strengths can foster the acquisition of a wide range of positive developmental outcomes. Jacobs and Wright (2019) found that extended and engaged membership in a values-based sports program fosters positive developmental outcomes both inside and outside of sport.

Sherif (2019) showed that human learning and development is driven by extrinsic and intrinsic stimuli. In this study, the author suggests that learning which is based on personal interest and curiosity is more effective and impactful, and thus, important for overall adolescent development. This is significant because the majority of youth sport participation is driven by personal interest and curiosity. As described by Petitpas et al. (2004), sports are a good context for leadership development because adolescents place a high value on sport participation and sport provides young people with a valued place within a structured peer-involved activity, and also because sport is a voluntary activity that is both intrinsically and extrinsically motivating, and one that links young people to coaches who are positioned to assume the role of caring adult mentors.

In the same spirit, Weiss et al. (2016) posit that developing social, psychological, and behavioral assets is maximized when opportunities for skill building occur within a safe and supportive climate guided by caring, competent, and compassionate adults and mentors. The literature presented here provides strong evidence of the positive results associated with youth sports participation (Nascimento et al., 2021). For these reasons, leadership development scholars have begun to advocate for increased leadership development efforts in extracurricular sports programs, given that they afford participants opportunities to build competencies in an enjoyable and safe environment (Kendellen & Camire, 2015).

Schools also offer a particularly attractive environment in which to practice sport and intentionally coach life skills because that it is where youth are most accessible and coaches who work to coach life skills in this setting can contribute to the educational mission of schools (Danish et al., 2005). Further, Kendellen and Camire (2015) posit that extracurricular youth sport programs are justified principally on the expectation that students can develop life skills through participation, in accordance with the educational mandates of schools. Such recognition by both scholars and coaches has led to an increased integration between the fields of teaching and coaching.

Nelson et al. (2014) argue that coaching has more to do with teaching (and subsequent learning) than anything else, and as such, it “could be contended that the fields of teaching and coaching are in need of closer connection” (pp. 513-514). In light of such developments, scholars have begun to suggest that “educational research could help to further develop understanding about coaching as it is a related field from which academics and practitioners could learn” (Nelson et al., 2014, p. 514). Focusing further on the relationship between coaching and teaching is important if coaching is to continue to draw on pedagogical theorizing to better make sense of practice (Nelson et al., 2014).

Wallace and Shipherd (2020) argue that coaches should not only focus on providing athletes with opportunities to practice and develop effective leadership behaviors but should also encourage their athletes to engage in self-reflection to identify their leadership strengths and weaknesses:

Ideally, coaches and athletic departments should integrate an athlete leader development program into their team or athletic program. Such a program should focus on improving athlete leader self-awareness of their strengths and weaknesses, identifying their team’s

leadership needs, goal setting to promote leader development, opportunities for athlete leaders to discuss potential problems and practice decision making in challenging situations, and opportunities to be evaluated and receive feedback from teammates and coaches. (Wallace & Shipherd, 2020, p. 23)

This suggestion was made by the authors because leadership development programs often include this as an initial first step, as it promotes self-awareness, which is necessary for growth and improvement. Further, Pierce et al. (2017) argue that the suitability of a learning environment and how that learning environment is interpreted may contribute to positive or negative transfer outcomes.

### **Defining Transfer**

In a world that is rapidly changing, young people benefit from developing a range of personal and social skills such as peer relationship skills, prosocial behaviors, leadership skills, problem-solving skills, and personal and social responsibility skills. When children develop these personal and social skills, they will not only be more successful learners, but they will also be more likely to make a more successful transition to adult life (Opstoel et al., 2019). In the same study, the authors argue that one of the reasons that physical education and sports are suitable contexts for learning these skills is the transferability of these skills to other domains in life. For example, in physical education and sports, children can learn how to solve problems, communicate, and work as a team, which are skills they will also need in daily life either at home or at work (Opstoel et al., 2019).

The importance of transferability is also noted by Kendellen and Camire (2015), who argue that for sport to be of value to the masses, the skills developed in this context must be applicable in domains beyond sport. Similarly, Gould and Carson (2008) argue that for the skills

developed in sport to classify as life skills, they must be applied in domains beyond sport, such as at school, at work, with one's family, or in their community. However, this process had no formally recognized name within the field of leadership studies until it was recognized and defined as transfer, or "the process by which sport participants internalize the skills they have developed in sport and subsequently apply them in life" (Forneris et al., 2012, p. 395). Despite the proliferation of studies and support for life skills transfer among leadership scholars, much of this research has been criticized because it does not use a uniform operational definition of life skills transfer (Gould and Carson, 2008; Pierce et al., 2017), and many unanswered questions remain regarding the processes and conditions that facilitate life skills transfer from sport to other contexts (Bean et al., 2020).

In response to these shortcomings, a comprehensive definition and model of life skills transfer was developed by Pierce et al. (2017). The authors postulated that "an individual experiences life skills transfer as an ongoing process whereby they continually interact and interpret their environments to produce positive or negative life skills transfer outcomes" (p. 186). Pierce et al.'s (2017) model outlines that various learning contexts, such as school, sport, and family, are initial contexts for life skills adoption, and individual internal and external assets influence life skills learning and transfer to other domains, all within the broad sociocultural climate across time. However, the authors are sure to note that the model is comprehensive and is not meant to be tested in its entirety (Bean et al., 2020).

One example of a study that operationalized this definition is Bean et al. (2020), who conducted a study to explore the processes of life skills development and transfer in youth hockey and volleyball. The authors found that youth athletes felt that the psychological processes of (a) developing their confidence, (b) becoming aware of transfer possibilities, (c) perceiving

support from their coaches, and (d) perceiving similarities across life contexts influenced their life skills transfer processes. The authors also recognize that with clear and explicit explanations from coaches, younger athletes can understand the notion of transfer. Coaches are thus encouraged to integrate opportunities for youth to practice, discuss, and reflect on life skills transfer attempts (successful or not) with peers to enhance youth's understanding and awareness of requirements for successful transfer application (Bean et al., 2020). Here, the authors acknowledge one of the most important factors for youth basketball coaches to consider when implementing a leadership development model in their program—the difference between implicit and explicit methods for skill development.

### **Implicit vs. Explicit Life Skill Development**

Although there is increased interest from scholars and coaches on how to use youth sport as a platform for leadership development, it is important to keep in mind that simply participating in sports does not automatically lead to positive outcomes (Opstoel et al., 2019). The life skills development and transfer process in sport has been theoretically debated by researchers as being implicit, explicit, or along a continuum (Bean et al., 2020). An implicit approach includes programs that focus on developing sport-specific outcomes, but do not deliberately frame these outcomes as transferable skills, while an explicit approach involves creating an environment in which the transferability of skills is explicitly taught by program leaders (Bean et al., 2020).

Empirically, researchers have found that implicit life skills development can result in youth inherently adopting skills through their sport experiences and transferring them to other life domains without prompting (Bean et al., 2020). However, in order to maximize the leadership skills developed and retained by participants, other researchers support the explicit

teaching of life skills and transfer, encouraging coaches to integrate deliberate (i.e., explicit) strategies into their practices, such as identifying and using teachable moments as opportunities to discuss life skills and transfer or using imagery to visualize how a life skill learned in sport could be applied in a non-sport setting (Bean et al., 2020). For example, Gould and Voelker (2010) question how much leadership development is occurring if leadership skills are not proactively taught and encourage scholars and coaches to ask themselves “how much our athletes are learning about leadership just by being there and to what degree we need to do something more to develop leaders for our future” (p. 14).

This paper agrees with the argument that it is the responsibility of youth sports coaches to create the pedagogical circumstances under which positive outcomes can be obtained (Opstoel et al., 2019). In addition to teaching skills in an intentional and systematic manner, programs that promote psychosocial development should have clearly defined goals and strategies to enhance the generalizability and transfer of life skills to other important life domains (Opstoel et al., 2019). Further, coaches play an important role in structuring the pedagogical circumstances under which positive outcomes and life skills transfer can be achieved. Therefore, youth basketball coaches need to create an appropriate environment and supportive interpersonal relationships for skills to be transferred (Opstoel et al., 2019).

### **Creating a Safe Learning Environment**

One of the most important lessons learned by Rhee and Sigler (2020) when implementing their leadership development program was that process and culture trumped the content and structure of their program. The authors argue that “without the right type of process and culture that focus on relationship-building to support leadership development, it [is] rather difficult to transform our students...Even though you might have the right type of curriculum or structure,



the way students experience the program is largely determined by the process and culture” (Rhee & Sigler, 2020, p. 116).

Hancock et al. (2012) argue that it is important that leadership educators can facilitate leadership skill development by providing youth with opportunities to practice their leadership skills in a safe environment with supportive adults, while Weiss et al. (2016) similarly point out that developing social, psychological, and behavioral assets is maximized when opportunities for skill building occur within a safe and supportive climate guided by caring, competent, and compassionate adults and mentors.

Jacobs and Wright (2019) found that the youth who participated in their leadership development program were strong advocates of how the program facilitated positive relationships with coaches and peers along with fostering a physically and psychologically safe space, which are both viewed as particularly important factors for interventions with youth in terms of building resiliency and developing positive social skills. In this study, developing relationships with coaches was also a factor that enhanced the transfer process, as youth felt like they belonged to a group that valued the same core values and behaviors as them (Jacobs & Wright, 2019).

Based on these findings, Jacobs and Wright (2019) suggest that practitioners should consider how they can create a physically and emotionally safe program, such as through building meaningful relationships, showing athletes that they care about them as individuals, and letting them know that it is acceptable to make mistakes. Petitpas et al. (2004) similarly found that the key to the success of their leadership development program was the relationships that were developed between academic coaches and student-athletes, school personnel, coaches, and parents. Weiss et al. (2016) provide further defense for this argument by sharing that, in their

study, successful recall and transfer of life skills learning among participants was attributed to “the synergy among program components—intentional curriculum, teaching strategies, and supportive relationships” (p. 280). Therefore, in order to achieve intended learning outcomes and transfer, coaches should prioritize creating a safe learning environment and building a positive relationship with each athlete in their program.

This chapter has identified a few of the most important factors to consider for any youth basketball coach looking to implement an explicit leadership development model in their program. In the next chapter, in order to suggest a framework through which coaches can formulate their leadership development philosophy, the author will provide a short overview of one of the most popular leadership theories in the field of communication studies—servant leadership theory—to show how and why it holds tremendous potential as a framework for youth basketball coaches interested in using the game as a platform for leadership development.

## CHAPTER V: SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Servant leadership theory was developed by Robert Greenleaf, who spent forty years working at AT&T (Westre, 2003). The majority of his time with the company was spent as a management specialist, where he was able to experiment with the best strategies for managing employees in an organizational setting. After retiring, he began a second career as a consultant for several other organizations based on his experiences with AT&T. During this time, he and his associates opened the Center of Applied Ethics, which today is known as the Robert K. Greenleaf Center (Westre, 2003). The mission of this community center is to fundamentally improve the quality of all institutions through a new approach to leadership, structure, and decision-making. This approach—servant leadership—emphasizes increased service to others, a holistic approach to work, promoting a sense of community, and sharing of power in decision-making (Westre, 2003).

In 1970, Greenleaf published the first of three foundational essays that would go on to serve as the foundation for his theory. A common complaint throughout the United States at the time was that most large organizations were impersonal and uncaring toward the individual and were therefore to blame for the crisis of mismanagement in our society. As a result, Greenleaf (1970) published his first essay, which was titled “The Servant as Leader.” The essay encouraged those in leadership positions to take on more personal responsibility and accountability with the ultimate goal of building a more caring society.

Greenleaf (1977) believed that leaders had the power to build or destroy individuals by the way they led. He believed that leadership impacted the lives of followers and the members of an institution regardless of whether such an impact was intended, and that the particular direction of influence, either positive or negative, was a purposeful, voluntary decision made by the leader.

He believed that the leader must begin with a desire to serve first and that the opportunity to lead would then follow (Greenleaf, 1977).

As part of the choice to serve first, Greenleaf believed that servant leaders must change the motivation by which they lead. He called leaders to "make sure that the other people's highest priority needs are being served" (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 13). He believed that leaders would recognize that they were making a positive difference if they answered the following questions in the affirmative: "Do those being served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? What is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or at least not be further deprived?" (Greenleaf, 1977, pp. 13-14).

In addition to being applicable to a variety of organizational settings, Greenleaf suggested that servant leadership had potential as a leadership style for other social institutions when, while working in his post-retirement consultant role, he applied his theory to a wide variety of institutions, such as universities, charitable foundations, churches, professional associations, and healthcare organizations (Greenleaf, 1977). The implication was that most organizations, regardless of their environment, can potentially benefit from the servant leadership style (Westre, 2003). However, one of the theory's most common applications outside of the organizational context has been in the field of education.

Many colleges and universities offer business management courses strictly devoted to teaching servant leadership concepts and practices (Westre, 2003). This is largely due to Greenleaf (1977) explicitly recognizing that his theory could be applied to educational pursuits—which is suggested by the fifth chapter of his seminal text, "Servant Leadership in Education" (pp. 163-201). He believed that education can and should be used as a platform to "raise the

spirit of young people, help them build their confidence that they can successfully contend with the condition, [and] work with them to find the direction they need to go and the competencies they need to acquire” (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 172). Despite this proclamation, Greenleaf never identified the specific skills or competencies that define a servant leader, nor did he provide educators with a tool or model to help them achieve these outcomes with the youth they are responsible for developing. Anxious to implement his philosophy, several scholars have taken it upon themselves to dissect his work and provide both researchers and leadership development practitioners with an explicit list of the skills, characteristics, and behaviors that define servant leadership.

### **Characteristics of Servant Leaders**

One of the major issues in servant leadership research is the lack of a clear definition or specific set of skills and behaviors that define servant leaders. As a result, most researchers who have utilized this theory have employed a definition of servant leadership that aligns with their claims, and thus, no standard definition for the theory has been developed to date (Eva et al., 2019). While there is no standard definition, it is commonly agreed upon that servant leadership is (1) an other-oriented approach to leadership, (2) manifested through one-on-one prioritizing of follower individual needs and interests, and (3) an outwards reorienting of a leader’s concern for self toward concern for others within the organization and the larger community (Eva et al., 2019).

While Greenleaf does not explicitly list the leadership characteristics or behaviors that define servant leadership in his writings, he does identify concepts and practices that can help practitioners apply his principles. Spears (1995) conducted a thorough analysis of Greenleaf’s work in order to extract from those concepts a list of characteristics which he ascribes to the

servant leader. Spears argues that this work is necessary because Greenleaf's text does not include a typical instructional manual complete with a detailed formula for implementation: "This is not a straightforward management philosophy; there are no points to follow. Instead, [practitioners] must reflect upon their philosophies and behavior and have ongoing discussions" (Spears, 1995, p. 132). Spears (1995) recognizes that the ten characteristics which he identifies are by no means exhaustive but argues that the ones he identifies "serve to communicate the power and promise that [Greenleaf's] concept offers to those who are open to its invitation and challenge" (p. 6).

These ten characteristics are: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community (Spears, 1995). A later study by van Dierendonck and Patterson (2015) simplified this list of characteristics down to four behaviors which, the authors argue, exemplify the core of servant leadership: empowerment, authenticity, stewardship, and providing direction. Peachey and Burton (2017) subsequently offered a more thorough description of each of these behaviors to inform future scholarship.

Empowerment means that a servant leader fosters an empowering attitude in followers. This empowering attitude generates follower self-confidence and provides followers with a sense of personal power. This type of leadership behavior encourages information sharing with followers, self-directed decision-making, and provides support and coaching for innovative performance. Servant leaders fundamentally believe in the intrinsic value possessed by each follower, recognizing and acknowledging each person's abilities and what the person can learn. (Peachey & Burton, 2017).

Servant leaders demonstrate authenticity by being true to themselves, both in public and in private. Authenticity is about expressing oneself in ways that are consistent with inner feelings and thoughts. A servant leader's authenticity is demonstrated by doing what is promised, being visible within the organization, and leading with honesty and vulnerability. Further, authenticity within the context of an organization indicates the leader is behaving in such a way that the professional role of the leader remains secondary to whom the individual is as a person (Peachey & Burton, 2017).

Servant leaders provide direction by clearly demonstrating to followers what is expected of them. Within the context of servant leadership, leaders provide an appropriate amount of accountability for followers. Servant leaders also customize directions based on followers' abilities, needs, and input. This type of leading allows for new ways of getting things accomplished and creates alternative ways to confront old problems, with consistent reliance on values and convictions when accomplishing tasks (Peachey & Burton, 2017).

Finally, servant leaders practice stewardship by being willing to take responsibility for the entire organization, and by putting the interests of the organization over and above their own self-interests. Servant leaders act as role models and care takers. By acting as role models and setting an example for followers, leaders can inspire others to act in the common interests of all. The characteristics of stewardship are closely linked to the concepts of teamwork, social responsibility, and loyalty (Peachey & Burton, 2017).

### **Applicability to Sports**

While servant leadership is an organizational communication theory that has mostly been applied to large organizations, corporations, and educational institutions, there has also been an increased interest in the construct of servant leadership as a meaningful and viable form of

leadership in sports (Peachey & Burton, 2017). Because Greenleaf implied that his theory could be applied to any type of social institution, coaches and sport leadership scholars have borrowed the theory and applied it to their own discipline in order to provide coaches with a framework for using sport as a platform for practicing and teaching servant leadership. Applying an organizational communication theory to sport leadership is not out of the ordinary, as sport leadership study has a long tradition of borrowing leadership styles from business, adapting them, and examining their potential applicability to sport (Westre, 2003).

Westre (2008) argued that servant leadership is applicable in the area of sport because athletes desire leaders who seek their input regarding decisions relating to the team, provide positive feedback and recognition, exhibit sincere sensitivity to the needs of the athletes both in and out of sport, and generally demonstrate a people-centered attitude. As a result, several coaches have attempted to use servant leadership theory to inform their coaching philosophy. However, one of the major criticisms of the servant leadership style from coaches is that it is “difficult to apply and idealistic given the lack of specific instructions for implementation” (Westre, 2003, p. 3).

Those who criticize Greenleaf’s theory for this reason may in fact be justified in their remarks as a matter of opinion; however, they might also be confirming the prophetic vision of Greenleaf, who himself admitted that servant leadership may possess concepts that are not easily operationalized and that may be difficult to apply in practice (Westre, 2003): “What I have to say comes from experience—my own and that of others—which bears on institutional reconstruction. It is a personal statement, and it is meant to be neither a scholarly treatise nor a how-to-do-it manual” (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 49). While his ideas are unorthodox, Westre (2003) argues that may be exactly why they are so valuable: “Change from traditional practices often



requires radical and innovative ideas. Greenleaf called for a radical change in how a leader thinks and operates and in order to do that he is proposing ideas and concepts that are unorthodox and ‘outside the box’” (pp. 3-4).

While this theory has been met with some criticism, it has gained significant support in the area of coaching youth sports because most youth coaches strive to be effective leaders, and servant leadership has been described as “being exactly what our changing society...needs in terms of leadership style” (Westre, 2003, p. 4). Further, youth sport coaches and sport leadership scholars both recognize that we need to identify, nurture, and train servant leaders in our society, and servant leadership offers them a framework for informing their approach to achieve such a lofty goal. However, alluding to the abstract nature of his theory, Greenleaf (1977) recognized that training servant leaders would be nearly impossible without an explicit model for doing so.

Greenleaf (1977) noted that a major issue with the way education has developed in America is that educators often struggle to “serve perhaps eighty-five percent of the population who learn best from experience and have trouble with abstract concepts, which dominate school curricula” (p. 163). From this statement, one can deduce that Greenleaf (1977) would support the idea of locating an explicit leadership development model to teach his principles to the participants of a youth basketball program. When discussing the goal of servant leadership, Greenleaf stated the following:

I have wondered whether there is any other single opportunity...today that ranks greater in importance than finding and coaching those students who have the potential for being exceptional bearers of responsibility...it is neither difficult nor expensive to do—but it does take the will to serve, clarity of purpose, and determination ... There is no surer way

to guarantee the future than to have strong ethical leaders in the making now. (pp. 200-201)

While the will to serve, clarity of purpose, and determination are admirable, even Greenleaf himself recognizes that these elements are not enough to effectively practice and/or teach servant leadership principles.

While scholars have been able to identify some of the skills and behaviors that define servant leadership, there is still no model available for teaching these skills and behaviors in a youth sport context. This makes it very difficult for youth basketball coaches to implement and teach servant leadership principles in their program. That coaches want to use this theory as a framework to inform their practice is encouraging, but how can they capitalize on that motivation if they do not have a practical model for implementation? Therefore, youth basketball coaches would benefit from research that can locate an explicit leadership development model that aligns with Greenleaf's goals, values, and principles, and successfully adapts that model for use in a youth sport context. Finding an explicit leadership development model that emphasizes increased service to others and a sense of community would empower youth basketball coaches to actualize the principles of servant leadership in their programs (Westre, 2003).

## CHAPTER VI: SOCIAL CHANGE MODEL OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Scholars of leadership and social change generally agree that irrespective of the nature and characteristics of leadership, the main outcome of effective leadership in any social context is positive social change (Banerjee, 2015). One model that urges individuals to lead with a commitment to serving the common good while also promoting positive social change, and is also explicitly engaged in furthering social equality, democracy, and justice (Martinez et al., 2020; Harper & Kezar, 2021) is the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (SCM) (HERI, 1996).

SCM seeks to show the connection between individuals and groups and their responsibility as leaders to work toward the common good of their community. As Ricketts et al. (2008) ask, “What are leaders if not change agents working to build a better tomorrow?” (p. 25). Thus, the two primary goals of SCM are (1) to enhance student learning and development, particularly in the areas of self-knowledge and leadership competence, and (2) to facilitate positive social change at the institution or in the community (Harper & Kezar, 2021).

The group of higher education administrators and educators who created the model, known as The Working Ensemble, argued that a new model was needed to best prepare the new generation of leaders; a model that centers “service, social justice and a nonhierarchical approach to leadership and social change” (Harper & Kezar, 2021, p. 157). SCM has since been widely used among several generations of college students and created change agents with a greater commitment to seeing social change as an objective of leadership (Harper & Kezar, 2021; Soria et al., 2013; Ricketts et al., 2008). Not only has it changed how students view leadership, but it has also enhanced their leadership skills.

Buschlen and Dvorak (2011) explored the effects on undergraduate students after a 16-week, for-credit academic course based on SCM. The findings suggested that student SCM skill-based knowledge did improve compared to students who did not receive the intervention and subsequently that post-industrial leadership skills associated with SCM can be learned in a structured, academic course (Buschlen & Dvorak, 2011). The curriculum they developed, when “fused with intentional, theoretical, and application-based activities, seemingly creates a well-rounded classroom experience” (Buschlen & Dvorak, 2011, p. 41).

SCM was created with college students in mind based on the belief that colleges and universities were distinctive environments where values such as collaboration and common purpose were critical to the overall function of the institution, and thus, important to students interested in becoming leaders for social change (Harper & Kezar, 2021). However, colleges and universities are not the only environments where values such as collaboration and common purpose are critical to the overall function of the institution—there are other environments in which these elements are vital, such as youth basketball. Therefore, given that (a) youth sports have been shown to be more effective than the classroom for developing leadership competencies in young people, and (b) relevant literature suggests that practitioners can successfully apply curricular leadership development models to extracurricular activities, both leadership development scholars and youth basketball coaches could benefit from applying SCM to youth basketball programs.

## SCM

The SCM *Guidebook* (HERI, 1996), which was written by The Working Ensemble to explain their goals, values, philosophies, and strategies for leadership development, begins with a note to potential users. The authors suggest that the *Guidebook* should be used by anyone who:

(a) is interested in initiating a leadership development project for students; (b) values a nonhierarchical leadership process and is comfortable with collaborative strategies; (c) is interested in the concept or practice of leadership; (d) is promoting leadership development programs; (e) is developing leadership competencies as vehicles for social change; (f) is experimenting with a reflective, collaborative effort to address an issue; (g) is contributing new perspectives to our understanding of leadership; or (h) is mobilizing others on behalf of social change (HERI, 1996).

According to The Ensemble, the purpose of the materials presented in the *Guidebook* is to facilitate the development of programs for student leadership development on the campus, and the authors recognize that the life of the typical academic or student affairs administrator is already so busy and full that he or she may not be able to afford the luxury of embarking on a major new effort (HERI, 1996). For this reason, they believe that there are other applications of the principles underlying this model that might relate to the goals and values of student affairs personnel or academic administrators. So, while SCM was clearly created for use in higher education, The Working Ensemble explicitly kept the model's potential for application broad: "Remember: Anyone can use and practice the principles outlined in this *Guidebook*" (HERI, 1996, p. 9). In other words, they recognized that the basic principles of SCM can—and should—be adapted for use in other contexts besides higher education.

### **Development of the Model**

In 1993, the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) HERI received a grant from the Eisenhower Leadership Development program of the United States Department of Education to undertake a project aimed at developing a model of leadership development for undergraduate college students. The grant proposal, entitled *Empowering the Next Generations: New*

*Approaches to Leadership and Leadership Development*, had as its unique feature the “collaboration of campus-based professionals in the field of student affairs in the design and field testing of the model. A major assumption underlying the project was that leadership is ultimately about change, and that effective leaders are those who are able to effect positive change on behalf of others and society” (HERI, 1996, p. 10).

Work for this project began in January 1994, after The Working Ensemble had met together for more than fifty hours since the Fall of 1993 to plan its direction. The Working Ensemble was comprised of five UCLA staff (two co-principal investigators; three doctoral students in higher education) together with ten leadership specialists/student affairs professionals from across the country. HERI justifies the decision to include leadership specialists/student affairs professionals in The Working Ensemble by arguing that student affairs educators have a long history in academia of fostering leadership development among students, as they have for many decades been committed to inclusion, to the empowerment of diverse students, and to the goal of developing students' full talents and potential (HERI, 1996). Additionally, the authors suggest that the operational definition of leadership which emerged from their study—and which helped to shape their thinking about the model presented in the *Guidebook*—represents a “nonhierarchical form of leadership, where the ‘leader’ functions as a catalyst and facilitator in enabling the group to act collectively in accomplishing the common vision” (HERI, 1996, p. 11).

Therefore, the model operates on the following basic assumptions: (a) leadership is concerned with effecting change on behalf of others and society; (b) leadership is collaborative; (c) leadership is a process rather than a position; (d) leadership should be values-based; (e) all people—not just those who hold formal leadership positions—are potential leaders; and (f) service is a powerful vehicle for developing students’ leadership skills (HERI, 1996). Any effort

to implement SCM, then, must be considerate of these assumptions in order to justify the model's application.

### **Development of the *Guidebook***

What is presented here is a *Guidebook* that reflects the authors' collective work during the first two years they worked together. As mentioned earlier, it is intended primarily as a resource and guide for professionals who are engaged in leadership development activities with students or for persons who intend to begin such a leadership program (HERI, 1996). It is important to note how broad and vague this directive is—The Working Ensemble wanted this *Guidebook* to be used by any and all practitioners who are engaged in leadership development activities or intend to start a leadership development program, regardless of context. A preliminary draft of the *Guidebook* (i.e., Version I) was presented to a retreat that was held at Airlie House Conference Center in Virginia, from October 27-29, 1994 (HERI, 1996). In addition to The Working Ensemble, attendees included students selected from diverse institutions across the country, representatives of national student affairs and higher education associates, and several consultants.

Feedback from this retreat proved to be extremely helpful in developing Version II of the *Guidebook*, which was the first version to be implemented on a large scale. As the *Guidebook* gained popularity and recognition among leadership development scholars, subsequent revisions and refinements were made possible as professionals in the field had the opportunity to examine, discuss and practice the model. The Working Ensemble hoped that Version II of the *Guidebook* would remain “a living, working document which reflects the latest knowledge, expertise, and experience in developing leadership for social change” (HERI, 1996, p. 14). This suggests that, in addition to encouraging the application of SCM to new and unique contexts, The Working

Ensemble also wanted the model to continually evolve and adapt along with the challenges that future generations will be expected to overcome.

## **Preamble**

In the “Preamble” section of the *Guidebook*, The Working Ensemble goes into further detail on some of the basic assumptions and definitions that undergird the model’s foundation. As interpreted by SCM, a leader is not necessarily a person who holds a formal position of leadership or who is perceived as a leader by others; rather, a leader is regarded as “one who is able to effect positive change for the betterment of others, the community, and the society. All people, in other words, are potential leaders” (HERI, 1996, p. 16). Moreover, the authors argue that “the process of leadership cannot be described simply in terms of the behavior of an individual; rather, leadership involves collaborative relationships that lead to collective action grounded in the shared values of people who work together to effect positive change” (HERI, 1996, p. 16). The Working Ensemble also suggests that leadership is values-based:

The notions of leader as change agent and of leadership as collective action to effect social change suggest that a conscious focus on values should be at the core of any leadership development effort. We believe that any new program in leadership development should focus not only on the value implications of any proposed social change, but also on the personal values of the leaders themselves. While some academic colleagues may be uncomfortable with our advocacy of a ‘values-based’ approach, we feel strongly that any education program is inevitably based on values, and that there is a need to embrace common human values such as self-knowledge, service, and collaboration to guide our common civic agendas. (HERI, 1996, p. 16)



In other words, because leadership development is inherently value-based, The Working Ensemble argues that leadership development practitioners should embrace this reality rather than ignore it; if youth are inevitably going to learn about values through formal leadership development efforts, practitioners might as well explicitly address those values in order to make sure youth are achieving optimal outcomes.

It is worth noting that The Working Ensemble's idea of effective leadership shares a fundamental similarity with the conceptualization of servant leadership offered by Greenleaf (1977); both frameworks have similar goals and values, and also have similar inspiration for their work—creating positive social change at the individual, institutional, and societal level: “We dedicate ourselves to the design and dissemination of a value-based leadership development model which will assist...educators in their efforts to prepare a new generation of effective leaders for social change. We believe that we must transform the way we conceptualize and practice leadership as we move to confront the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” (HERI, 1996, p. 17). The Working Ensemble's belief that we must transform the way we conceptualize and practice leadership as we move to confront the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century makes SCM a fitting model for practicing servant leadership as a youth basketball coach, as Robert Greenleaf was trying to achieve the same thing when he developed servant leadership theory.

### **The Model**

There are a few basic premises that serve as the foundation of SCM. First, the model is inclusive, in that it is designed to enhance the development of leadership qualities in all participants—those who hold formal leadership positions as well as those who do not—and to promote a process that is inclusive and actively engages all who wish to make positive contributions to our society. Second, leadership is viewed as a process rather than a position.

Third, SCM explicitly promotes the values of equity, social justice, self-knowledge, personal empowerment, collaboration, citizenship, and service. Fourth, the model is based on the idea that service provides a powerful vehicle for developing student leadership capabilities in a collaborative environment, as learning happens by making meaning of life experiences (HERI, 1996).

Furthermore, while the model was initially designed to assist professionals in the field of student affairs who are engaged (or wish to engage) in facilitating leadership development among students, The Working Ensemble also came to realize that it can also be useful to faculty, academic administrators, or students who are interested in undertaking leadership development projects of their own (HERI, 1996). They remind potential users of the *Guidebook* that SCM is only one of many possible models of leadership development; it is “presented as a working framework that is subject to regular revision and refinement based on the experiences of those who use it. Practitioners and students may well find certain elements in the model to be more applicable or relevant than others. Moreover, different types of institutions may need to make some modifications in accordance with their institutional missions” (HERI, 1996, p. 18). This passage serves as further evidence that The Working Ensemble intentionally left SCM’s potential for application broad in order to encourage scholars and practitioners from other areas of specialization to interpret, adapt, and apply the model’s principles to their own unique contexts.

According to The Working Ensemble, SCM has two primary goals: (1) to enhance student learning and development, and more specifically, to develop in each student participant greater self-knowledge (understanding of one’s talents, values, and interests, especially as these relate to the student’s capacity to provide effective leadership) and leadership competence (the capacity to mobilize oneself and others to serve and to work collaboratively); and (2) to facilitate

positive social change at the institution or in the community; to undertake actions which will help the institution/community function more effectively and humanely (HERI, 1996).

Because this approach to leadership development is embedded in collaboration and concerned with fostering positive social change, SCM examines leadership development from three different perspectives or levels: the individual, the group, and the community/society. The “individual” level refers to the personal qualities that practitioners attempt to foster and develop in those who participate in a leadership development program. The “group” level is focused on how the collaborative leadership development process can be designed not only to facilitate the development of the desired individual qualities, but also to effect positive social change. The “community/society” level highlights what social ends the leadership development activity is intended to achieve (HERI, 1996). The interconnectedness between each of these levels will be explored later in this chapter.

## **Values**

Through their many hours of discussion and debate, it became clear to each member of The Working Ensemble that values were at the core of what they considered to be the critical elements in their leadership development model (HERI, 1996). Therefore, in addition to “change,” the hub around which their evolving model was developed, there are seven values that define SCM. The first value is “consciousness of self,” which the authors describe as being aware of the beliefs, values, attitudes, and emotions that motivate one to take action. The second value is “congruence,” which refers to thinking, feeling, and behaving with consistency, genuineness, authenticity, and honesty toward others; congruent persons are those whose actions are consistent with their most deeply held beliefs and convictions (HERI, 1996).

The third value is “commitment,” or the psychic energy that motivates an individual to serve and drives the collective effort toward change. The authors also state that commitment implies passion, intensity, and duration, and that it is directed toward both the group activity as well as its intended outcomes. Without commitment, they argue, knowledge of self is of little value; and without adequate knowledge of self, commitment is easily misdirected. Congruence, in turn, is most readily achieved when the person acts with commitment and knowledge of self (HERI, 1996).

The fourth value that defines SCM is “collaboration,” which The Working Ensemble defines as working with others in a common effort. Collaboration constitutes the cornerstone value of the group leadership effort because it empowers self and others through trust. The fifth value is “common purpose,” which the authors define as working with shared aims and values. Common purpose facilitates the group’s ability to engage in collective analysis of the issues at hand and the task to be undertaken. Common purpose is best achieved when all members of the group share in the vision and participate actively in articulating the purpose and goals of the leadership development activity. Recognizing the common purpose and mission of the group, they argue, helps to generate the high level of trust that any successful collaboration requires (HERI, 1996).

The sixth value is “controversy with civility,” which recognizes two fundamental realities of any creative group effort: (1) that differences in viewpoint among members of a group are inevitable, and (2) that such differences must be aired openly but with civility. Civility implies a respect for others, a willingness to hear each other’s views, and the exercise of restraint in criticizing the views and actions of others. According to The Working Ensemble, this value is inherently connected to the fifth value (common purpose) because it is best achieved in a

collaborative framework and when a common purpose has been identified. Further, the authors argue that controversy, conflict, and confrontation can often lead to new, creative solutions to problems, especially when it occurs in an atmosphere of civility, collaboration, and common purpose (HERI, 1996).

The seventh and final value that defines SCM is “citizenship,” which The Working Ensemble defines as “the process whereby the individual and the collaborative group become responsibly connected to the community and the society through the leadership development activity” (HERI, 1996, p. 23). To be a good citizen, they argue, is “to work for positive change on behalf of others and the community” (HERI, 1996, p. 23). As operationalized by The Working Ensemble, then, citizenship acknowledges the interdependence of all who are involved in or affected by the leadership development activity; it recognizes that the common purpose of the group must incorporate a sense of concern for the rights and welfare of all those who might be affected by the group’s efforts, as good citizenship recognizes that effective democracy involves individual responsibility as well as individual rights (HERI, 1996).

Since there happen to be seven values that define SCM and they all begin with the letter “C,” The Working Ensemble dubbed their foundational values the “7 Cs” of leadership development for social change. These values, in turn, can be organized within the three levels of the model mentioned previously: consciousness of self, congruence, and commitment are individual values; collaboration, common purpose, and controversy with civility are group values; and citizenship and change are community/societal values. Change, of course, is the “value hub” which gives meaning and purpose to the “7 Cs.” According to The Working Ensemble, change “is the ultimate goal of the creative process of leadership—to make a better world and a better society for self and others” (HERI, 1996, p. 24).

SCM suggests each of these values are interconnected in a number of ways. For example, group processes are facilitated when individual participants are conscious of self, committed, and behave in ways that are congruent with their personal values. At the same time, the individual learns from the collaborative group process; feedback from the group is most likely to enhance the individual qualities of consciousness of self, commitment, and congruence when the group operates collaboratively with common purpose and accepts controversy with civility (HERI, 1996).

Responsible citizenship and positive change are most likely to occur when the leadership group functions collaboratively, with common purpose, and encourages civility in the expression of controversy. Conversely, the group will find it very difficult to be an effective change agent or to fulfill its citizenship or community responsibilities if it cannot identify a common purpose, or if it pursues controversy with incivility. Additionally, if the group enjoys some initial success in its effort to serve, collaboration and common purpose are then reinforced (HERI, 1996).

SCM argues that the actions of each individual also have a direct effect on their community. It suggests that the community is most likely to respond positively to an individual's efforts to serve if these efforts are rooted in self-understanding, integrity, and genuine commitment. Responsible citizenship, in other words, is based on self-knowledge, congruence and commitment. Further, active engagement in any service effort can have an effect on the individual. Since leadership development program participants can learn through service, consciousness of self is enhanced through the realization of what one is (and is not) capable of doing. Commitment is enhanced if the individual feels that he or she can make a difference, and congruence is also enhanced as the individual comes to realize that positive change is most likely

to occur when individual actions are rooted in one's most deeply held values and beliefs (HERI, 1996).

The interconnectedness between each element of the model suggests that to apply the model in practice is “to encourage students not only to exemplify the individual values in their own lives, but also to incorporate the group values in their interactions with others” (HERI, 1996, p. 27). Learning about and practicing collaboration are essential to bringing about change that serves others—which is the essence of SCM. Therefore, the model is defined by its emphasis on both the personal and interpersonal dimensions of leadership. By “personal,” the authors mean “self-awareness and congruence: understanding one's salient values, talents and other individual characteristics, personal integrity, self-renewal, openness to learning, and establishing a personal focus or purpose” (HERI, 1996, p. 27). The “interpersonal” dimension includes communication skills, coalition building, honesty, respecting others, openness to differing views, collaborating, listening, and empowering others (HERI, 1996).

There is a clear need in our society to produce individuals with a higher capacity for practicing effective leadership (Rosch, 2018). American citizens often lack the skills and competencies needed to collaborate effectively with one another in spite of their differences; to embrace controversy with civility, rather than always trying to be right; to understand what it means to be a leader; to embrace opportunities for personal development; to recognize and embrace one's responsibility to serve others. This is largely because young people are leaving their educational careers without being trained on how to practice such skills, a collective failure that leaves them ill equipped to fulfill the potential of our democracy. As noted by The Working Ensemble, it is very difficult to be an effective change agent or to fulfill our citizenship or community responsibilities when we do not have the skills needed to do so.

As shown throughout this literature review, youth sports are a viable context for implementing explicit leadership development programs. Therefore, youth basketball coaches would benefit from the successful adaptation of SCM for use in a youth basketball program in order to use the game as a medium for teaching young people the values, skills, and competencies needed to create positive social change; to collaborate with one another in order to build a more just, equitable, and inclusive society. Ultimately, this could empower youth basketball coaches to practice servant leadership in their program, as they would be (1) practicing an other-oriented approach to leadership, (2) prioritizing the development of each individual and the group over their own needs, and (3) reorienting their concern for self toward concern for others within the program, the community, and the society (Greenleaf, 1977; Eva et al., 2019).



## CHAPTER VII: DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN

Rather than assisting students in separate silos and initiatives, DiPaolo (2017) argues that leadership development scholars and coaches should be integrating the areas of leadership education, performance psychology, and personal development into one unified model. Further, while he recognizes there are some general models available for the development of student athletes, his review suggests that they do not reflect the sense of *cura personalis*, or care for the whole person, to which most coaches aspire. The models that do exist for developing young athletes tend to be focused on just talent and skill development at specific ages rather than something more holistic (DiPaolo, 2017). Thus, a critical and important voice emerging in the research is the need for an integrated framework of athlete development. There are some interesting models of player development that partially align with these wishes; however, similar to the most common suggestions for practicing servant leadership as a coach, they typically mention the importance of holistic development but provide no specific student learning outcomes or curriculum to teach them (DiPaolo, 2017).

As far as providing no specific learning outcomes, SCM offers a solution to that problem by providing specific, measurable learning outcomes that are related to holistic leader development. As for the curriculum needed to achieve these learning outcomes, that is the purpose of this chapter. This paper has thus far justified the idea of implementing a curricular leadership development model in a youth basketball program in order to empower youth basketball coaches to practice servant leadership by giving them a model through which they can instill in youth athletes the values, skills, and competencies needed to build a more just, equitable, and inclusive society. Therefore, this chapter will provide practical considerations for implementing SCM in a youth basketball program based on (a) relevant literature, (b) personal

experiences of the author, and (c) the shared goals, values, and intentions of Robert Greenleaf (1977) and *The Working Ensemble* (HERI, 1996).

A few potential outcomes of such research are an assessment tool, a national dialogue that helps student-athletes, happier youth, more functional and successful teams, more effective coaches, and schools and organizations that can be proud of their students for making positive contributions to their communities and to our society (DiPaolo, 2017). Even further, the author of this paper argues that if coaches combine the potential of youth basketball as a medium for leadership development with the goals, values, and intentions of both servant leadership theory and SCM, more youth will be properly equipped with the skills and competencies needed to collaborate with one another effectively; to navigate our differences in a civil and constructive manner; to identify and work toward common goals rather than allowing our differences to drive division and oppression; to build and sustain more just, equitable, and inclusive communities. This will be so not only because more young people will be equipped with the skills needed to be empathetic, open-minded, constructive, and collaborative leaders, but also because they will have a new understanding of what “leadership” means—they will view effective leadership as a shared, collaborative act that is primarily aimed at creating positive social change.

In other words, great benefit could be experienced by all if youth sports coaches were given more comprehensive tools, training, and assistance in meeting the varied needs and significant challenges faced by young people today (DiPaolo, 2017). This would, of course, come with the imperative that coaches redefine what it means to practice; in youth basketball, overwhelming hours are invested in sport-specific skill development and game strategy. As DiPaolo (2017) argues, “the more effective coach would recognize that time and focus must be spent practicing skills and habits previously ignored—human and interpersonal skills that are

critical to overall player success” (p. 224). The author of this paper proposes that using servant leadership theory in conjunction with SCM provides youth basketball coaches with both a framework and an actionable model for achieving what DiPaolo (2017) suggests. However, as mentioned previously, coaches must first create a safe environment in which the learning, reflection, and practice of effective leadership skills is both encouraged and supported.

### **Suggestions for Creating a Safe Learning Environment**

One way to create a safe learning environment as a youth basketball coach is to model and embrace vulnerability—show the athletes that making mistakes is expected in sports, so rather than avoid them, we should confront our mistakes in order to learn, grow, and adapt. Since failure is inevitable in this context, it provides regular opportunities for coaches to show youth that “failure” does not necessarily have to be negative, as it can be framed as an opportunity for growth or a challenge to be overcome. Ideally, this will make participants more comfortable when practicing their newly developed leadership skills, as they will understand that it is acceptable to make mistakes. Further, youth may even come to interpret mistakes as a positive experience, as errors will provide them with opportunities to adapt, overcome obstacles, and grow as an individual.

Another way to promote the creation of a safe, comfortable learning environment is for a coach to prove to each participant that they care about them more as a person than as an athlete; that they care about them on an individual level (i.e., their goals, interests, values, and potential as a leader). Similarly, a coach who cares about fulfilling the potential of our democracy, and who also prepares each athlete with the skills needed to build and sustain a more just, equitable, and inclusive society, will likely prove to participants that they genuinely care for their future wellbeing and can thus be trusted. In other words, if a coach actually practices the “7 Cs” of

SCM rather than just preaches them, program participants will be much more comfortable learning about and practicing these skills themselves.

### **Leadership Development Programming**

Successful and effective leadership development programming requires “thoughtful planning, a well-articulated view of the nature of leadership that fits with the realities of [the learning context], a careful analysis of the structural and pedagogical components necessary to translate leadership theory into a coherent framework, and attention to a number of operational considerations that are critical to successfully achieving the intended outcomes” (Ruben et al., 2018, p. 242).

According to McClellan (2021), one needs to carry out five steps in order to successfully implement a leadership development program. First, one must develop (or find) a leadership competency model to build the program around. Here, SCM serves as the framework that the program is built around. Second, the model needs to be adapted to fit the unique needs of the specific program or institution in which it is being implemented. The literature presented herein has shown how a proven, curricular leadership development model can be adapted to fit the “institution” of youth basketball as a whole.

The third, fourth, and fifth steps (respectively) are to design the training program, develop the content, and assess the program’s effectiveness. Therefore, the remainder of this chapter will provide suggestions for carrying out these final three steps. Rather than reshape the way most youth basketball programs operate, this paper aims to provide a model that takes advantage of the implicit leadership development opportunities found in youth basketball by turning them into explicit leadership development opportunities. Because the learning opportunities are already present within this learning context, there is no need to overhaul the

structure of a youth basketball program when implementing these ideas. Rather, youth basketball coaches can use this model to exploit the game's potential as a context for youth leadership development without completely changing the way they coach their team.

### **Design the Training Program**

As mentioned previously, leadership training requires finding opportunities for self-development, self-reflection, and the application of leadership skills (Andreu et al., 2019). Therefore, the content proposed in this chapter will be specifically designed to encourage the self-reflection aspect of leadership development. The reason for this focus is that the other elements needed for leadership training (i.e., opportunities for self-development, opportunities for skill application, and coaching/mentoring) are inherent to the youth sport learning context. According to McCall et al.'s (1998) 70-20-10 model, these elements account for roughly 90% of effective leadership training.

The 70-20-10 model for leadership development, which was created by researchers and authors working with the Center for Creative Leadership, posits that 70% of a leadership development program should be focused on providing challenging experiences that allow participants to practice their skills, 20% should be dedicated to coaching and mentoring, and 10% should be dedicated to formal training to strengthen participants' leadership acumen (Franzen, 2020; McCall et al., 1988). As one example, Franzen (2020) used this framework to create and evaluate a leadership development program committed to preparing the next generation of socially responsible leaders. The reason the author chose this framework to achieve these specific goals is that "lessons learned from industry leaders suggest that learning occurs through a combination of experiential, social, and formal learning activities" (Franzen, 2020, p. 90).

The 70-20-10 model is applicable to youth basketball because 90% of what it recommends (i.e., experiential learning opportunities and coaching/mentoring) is inherently part of any basketball team and/or program; youth basketball programs provide participants with opportunities to learn and apply leadership skills under the guidance of trusted coaches and mentors. Therefore, a model that is constructed according to the 70-20-10 framework can easily be implemented within a youth basketball program without a total overhaul of the program's structure. What is proposed in this section, then, will supply the other 10% of the 70-20-10 model—the “formal training” element—in order to provide youth basketball coaches with an explicit method for effective leadership development.

The amount of time a youth basketball team spends together during any given week of their season can vary based on several factors, such as age, available gym space, and level of competition, among other things. Typically, an average youth basketball team holds between four and six structured “meetings” (i.e., practices and games) during a given week (in-season). Thus, in order to dedicate 10% of that structured learning time to formal training, a youth basketball coach must be willing to devote roughly one half of one practice each week to leading a group discussion that is based on the principles of SCM and aims to explicitly connect the team's experiences to the development and practice of the “7 Cs.”

The formal training element of this leadership development program should (a) help youth basketball players comprehend the principles of servant leadership theory and SCM, (b) teach them how to interpret basketball-related experiences as opportunities for leadership development, (c) provide opportunities for individual and group reflection, (d) help the athletes understand how the skills learned in these discussions can be applied and practiced on the basketball court, (e) make explicitly clear how the development, application, and practice of such

skills is connected to the development of the “7 Cs,” (f) explain how these skills can be transferred to other areas of their lives, and (g) teach participants how developing the “7 Cs” will empower them to collaborate effectively with one another in the future in order to create positive social change.

### **Develop the Content**

To begin, coaches should hold an informative, pre-season discussion to describe the goals, values, and intentions of both Robert Greenleaf (1977) and *The Working Ensemble* (HERI, 1996). Explaining the principles of servant leadership theory and SCM to their team, while also connecting those principles to the game of basketball, will provide participants with the proper frame of reference for interpreting team discussions about leadership. This discussion will also serve as an initial opportunity for athletes to consider the idea that basketball is about more than just basketball; that the game can serve as a “leadership laboratory” where they can learn and practice transferable leadership skills.

Only then will coaches be able to frame the wins, losses, disagreements, and challenges faced by their team through the lens of the “7 Cs.” Once the athletes understand what the “7 Cs” are, why they are important, and how they can be developed on the basketball court, team discussions can explicitly connect the team’s experiences to the development of consciousness of self, congruence, commitment, collaboration, common purpose, controversy with civility, and citizenship. The athletes will also understand how the development of these skills enhances their ability to work collaboratively with one another in order to create positive social change. One potential format for holding these discussions—one which can be used without completely abandoning the standard operating procedure of a typical youth basketball program—is the After-Action Review (AAR) process utilized by the United States military.

An AAR is a review process carried out by United States Navy SEALs after every mission they conduct. The process was initially developed by the United States Army in the 1970s to help its soldiers learn from both their mistakes and achievements and is still regularly used throughout the military today (Willink & Babin, 2015). There are four questions that comprise an effective AAR: (1) What did we intend to accomplish? (2) What happened? (3) Why did it happen that way? (4) What will we do next time for a better outcome or to repeat our success? (Willink & Babin, 2015). Youth basketball coaches can use this process to regularly review and reflect upon the team's experiences by connecting them to the "7 Cs."

For example, if two teammates were to get in an argument during a game over differing viewpoints, the coach might take a moment during the weekly AAR to connect that moment to "controversy with civility" by leading a discussion on how to disagree with one another in a civil manner. To guide this discussion, the coach could apply the four steps outlined by Willink and Babin (2015) to the argument to help the athletes understand how this situation can be used to develop the skill of embracing controversy with civility:

Coach: What did we intend to accomplish?

Athletes: We were trying to beat the other team.

C: What happened?

A: We had different ideas about the best strategy for defeating the other team, and we became more focused on arguing about who was right than winning the game.

C: Why did it happen that way?

A: Rather than listen to one another's point of view and analyze each other's feelings objectively, we both got defensive and were more interested in being right than identifying our shared goals and overcoming our differences to achieve those goals.



C: What will we do next time for a better outcome?

A: We will remind ourselves of our common purpose, listen to one another's point of view, respectfully hash out our differences, and collaborate effectively with one another by prioritizing the achievement of our shared goals over petty competition.

Again, the author of this paper does not intend to provide an exhaustive list of questions to ask or scenarios to discuss during weekly AARs in a youth basketball program. Rather, coaches—after internalizing the principles of servant leadership theory and SCM and describing those principles to their team in a pre-season discussion—should use the “7 Cs” as a framework for developing discussion questions and opportunities for reflection based on the unique experiences of their team. This will not only make the learning opportunities more personal and relevant for the athletes, but it will also help them see basketball as more than just a game—through these AARs, athletes will begin to see the basketball court as a “leadership laboratory” in which the skills derived from team AARs can be developed, practiced, refined, and ultimately applied to other areas of their lives in order to create positive social change.

Therefore, this paper does not see youth basketball coaches as teachers in the traditional sense of the word (i.e., content delivery and instruction) but rather as facilitators of learning who recognize inherent learning opportunities and provide students with a structure or framework through which they can interpret those opportunities in order to develop effective leadership skills and competencies (Rogers, 1969; Nelson et al., 2014). According to Rogers (1969), there are ten keys to being a responsible facilitator of learning:

1. The facilitator has much to do with setting the initial mood or climate of the group experience.

2. The facilitator helps to elicit and clarify the purposes of each individual, as well as the more general purpose of the group.
3. They rely on the desire of each student to implement those purposes which have meaning for them as the motivational force behind significant learning.
4. They endeavor to organize and make easily available the widest possible range of resources for learning.
5. They regard themselves as a flexible resource to be utilized by the group.
6. In response to expressions in the group, they accept both the intellectual content and the emotionalized attitudes, endeavoring to give each aspect the approximate degree of emphasis which it has for the individual or the group.
7. As the group climate is established, the facilitator is increasingly able to become a participant learner—a member of the group—expressing their views as those of one individual only.
8. They take the initiative in sharing with the group their feelings and thoughts in a way that does not demand nor impose but represents a personal perspective which participants may take or leave.
9. Throughout the group experience, they remain alert to expressions indicative of deep or strong feelings.
10. In their functioning as a facilitator of learning, the leader endeavors to recognize and accept their own limitations.

The application of these guidelines “challenges existing practice [by] requiring coaches and coach educators to refrain from teaching and instead become facilitators of learning” (Nelson et al., 2014, p. 522). Rather than delivering and assessing a prescribed curriculum, facilitators of

learning “work with learners to identify aspects that assist their ongoing learning and development” (Nelson et al., 2014, p. 522). This suggests that youth basketball coaches who want to act as facilitators of learning should work with athletes to identify experiences that would assist with their development as leaders—which is exactly what is suggested here through the use of weekly AARs.

This approach to leadership development allows athletes to assist in the identification of learning opportunities that will best aid their development, including how they should evaluate the achievement of their own learning outcomes in addition to those identified by SCM (Nelson et al., 2014). As facilitators of learning, then, youth basketball coaches should involve athletes in all stages of the developmental process rather than being the sole arbiter of training methods and the assessment of performance. This has been shown to have a positive effect on the learning process (Rogers, 1969).

Finally, facilitators of learning should not only help to elicit and clarify individual purposes, but also connect each individual’s purpose to the goals of the group more generally. This will transform the group into “a community of learners” (Nelson et al., 2014, p. 523), ideally increasing their ability to interpret youth basketball as a laboratory for developing, practicing, refining, and transferring leadership skills.

### **Assess the Program’s Effectiveness**

According to Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2016), there are three reasons to conduct an evaluation of a training program: (1) to enhance the program, (2) to support an environment of learning, and (3) to assess the program’s ability to achieve intended learning outcomes. As noted by Franzen (2020), formative evaluation is conducted after the execution of leadership

development activities to make continuous improvements to program content, delivery, and participant experience.

Kirkpatrick (1959) introduced the four-level model as a goal-based evaluation model to assess the effectiveness of learning and development programs. This model, which continues as a commonly used tool today, argues that individual and group learning that results from a training or development program can be measured and understood by analyzing the following four levels: reaction, learning, behavior, and results (Kirkpatrick, 1959).

“Reaction” measures whether learners find the training engaging and relevant to their lives; “learning” gauges the learning of each participant in relation to intended learning outcomes; “behavior” measures whether participants are truly impacted by the learning and if they have been able to transfer and apply newly developed skills to other areas of their lives; and “results” measures the success of the program against its intended developmental outcomes (Kirkpatrick, 1959). In a youth basketball program, the first three levels of evaluation should be focused on the experiences of the athlete, rather than the experiences or interpretations of the coach. This suggests that coaches should listen and seek to understand the perspectives and experiences of the athletes in order to inform future iterations of the program.

One of the most common methods for accomplishing this is conducting pre-/post-season surveys and/or interviews with each athlete. Fortunately, there is already a survey tool that has been developed specifically to measure leadership development outcomes associated with the “7 Cs”—the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (SRLS). The SRLS is a 68-item pre- and post-test typically given to students both at the beginning and end of their leadership development experience to judge their growth in relation to the “7 Cs” (Buschlen & Dvorak, 2011).

In a youth basketball program, each athlete could complete the SRLS and participate in a qualitative interview both at the beginning and end of the season in order to measure (1) how relevant and engaging the AARs are, (2) whether or not the athletes were able to internalize the “7 Cs” as a result of the program, and (3) whether or not the development of those skills influenced their behavior in other contexts. Armed with this knowledge, youth basketball coaches could continually adapt the content, structure, and delivery of their pre-season discussions and in-season AARs to optimize their program’s potential for leadership development. The final stage of the evaluation process, “learning,” should be based on the experiences and interpretations of the coach who conducted the leadership development program and the formative evaluation—what was learned from the assessment process, and how can that information be used to inform future iterations of the program?

Franzen (2020) suggests that a program designed according to McCall et al.’s (1988) 70-20-10 model and Kirkpatrick’s (1959) four-level model for program evaluation can be successful for instilling leadership skills in young people. In conjunction with one another, these two models provide youth basketball coaches with a structure through which they can clearly define their leadership development goals, measure results, identify areas of impact, and identify opportunities for improvement. Conducting a formative evaluation will enable youth basketball coaches to understand the relationship between reaction, learning, and behavior to sharpen their leadership development program and ensure that athletes are not only learning about the “7 Cs,” but also understand how those values, skills, and competencies can be transferred and practiced in other areas of their lives in order to contribute to positive social change.

## CHAPTER VIII: DISCUSSION

In their review of the increased integration between the fields of communication studies and leadership studies, Cunningham et al. (2020) recognize the significant potential for collaboration between leadership development scholars and communication scholars. This paper is a great example of that—it may not be perfect, and I have yet to actually put this research into practice, but it emphasizes the relationship between communication studies, leadership studies, and coaching youth sports, and it also shows how exploiting that relationship can make a positive contribution to each of these three fields simultaneously.

It contributes to communication studies literature by providing practitioners with a model for implementing one of its most popular theories in a context which has had difficulty doing so in the past. I argue that this research will help youth basketball coaches practice and teach servant leadership principles in their program because the goals, values, and intentions of *The Working Ensemble* (HERI, 1996) align with those of Robert Greenleaf (1977): both are primarily interested in (1) reorienting the way we define the concept of “leadership,” (2) contributing to the individual growth of others, (3) emphasizing the connection between individual, community, and society, and (4) creating positive social change.

This paper contributes to leadership studies literature by increasing the reach and potential uses of a respected and valuable model for leadership development by implementing it in a new and unique context that is not only extremely accessible to young people but has also been proven to be a fitting context for youth leadership development. This area of study is ripe for innovation, and such intersectional research will empower leadership studies scholars to expand their reach into new contexts which have not yet been fully explored or understood; if their goal is to provide more people with the values, skills, and competencies needed to be a

collaborative and socially responsible leader, then research like this can help them achieve that goal.

Finally, this research helps youth basketball coaches by providing us with a model that allows us to actually practice and teach the principles of servant leadership theory in our programs rather than just using it to inform our coaching philosophy in an abstract way. This is the problem I had during my lone year as a full-time basketball coach; I was inspired by the ideas, values, and beliefs of servant leadership theory, and I wanted to act as a servant leader in my role as a coach. However, I did not have a model for practicing the ideas of Robert Greenleaf—that is, (1) having an other-oriented approach to leadership, (2) prioritizing the individual needs and development of each athlete, and (3) outwardly reorienting my concern for self toward concern for others within the team, the community, and the larger society (Eva et al., 2019). This research has the potential to help me solve that problem.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

First and foremost, I look forward to implementing SCM in a youth basketball program as suggested in this paper. Once I do this, I will assess the effectiveness of the program and share the results in order to inform the practice of other youth basketball coaches. Implementing these ideas in a youth basketball program and reporting on their successes and failures will further inform future leadership development efforts in youth sport. If this can be done successfully, more coaches will be able to effectively implement the values and principles of servant leadership theory in their program, and as a result, more youth will be equipped with the values, skills, and competencies needed to build and sustain a more just, equitable, and inclusive society.

Another suggestion for future research comes from Jenkins (2019), who reported that even among leadership development practitioners in higher education institutions, most have

never received any formal leadership training. If youth basketball coaches do not receive any formal leadership training, it can be difficult for them to have the foundational knowledge and practical skills needed to successfully implement a leadership development model in their program. Given that the majority of leadership development experts in higher education institutions have not received any formal leadership training, it is reasonable to assume that most youth basketball coaches have not, either. Thus, it is important for future research to consider the most effective ways to teach coaches the foundational skills and knowledge needed to implement servant leadership principles and SCM in their program.

This might include the development of a training program for youth basketball coaches which could be used to efficiently teach them about the values, goals, and principles of Robert Greenleaf, The Working Ensemble, servant leadership theory, and SCM, while also describing the best-known practices for implementing youth leadership development models in a sports context. Ultimately, a program like this could be of interest to organizations such as the Jr. NBA, FIBA, or USA Basketball—three major organizations in the world of youth basketball that strive to empower both coaches and players to use the game as a medium for life skill development. The program could then be shared and implemented at coaching clinics, developmental academies, or summer camps where coaches spend time during the offseason to refine their coaching philosophies and strategies. The goal of creating such a program would not be to simply get coaches excited about the idea of using basketball as a medium for youth leadership development, but also to provide them with the framework, knowledge, and skills needed to accomplish this.

Another way that SCM could be continually refined and adapted for use in a youth sport context would be to survey the athletes who participated in this program further into their lives in



order to understand how the skills and competencies they developed may have transferred to and impacted their lives outside of basketball (Beaty et al., 2021). As Bush et al. (2019) note, understanding how participants benefitted from a program after a length of time away from the program would provide further implications for the program and model's usefulness. Such research would help coaches understand how a youth basketball leadership development program might be refined to increase its long-term impact on the attitudes, beliefs, and values of program participants. Similarly, McKee and Bruce (2021) argue that future studies should examine the enactment of learned skills and engagement in transformative leadership beyond the time spent in intentional study to determine impacts on career and life trajectories. This suggests that scholars, coaches, and the athletes themselves could benefit from an increase in longitudinal studies, which could ensure that learning outcomes are being achieved even after the conclusion of the training program.

Communication scholars might explore why communication is not one of the “7 Cs” of SCM. It is reasonable to argue that each of the “7 Cs,” including change (the value hub around which the “7 Cs” are centered), requires effective communication skills to be put into practice. Is it possible that seeking to understand SCM through a communication lens might increase the effectiveness of the model toward achieving intended learning outcomes? As argued by Cunningham et al. (2020), there is significant potential for collaboration between communication and leadership scholars, and if we continue to understand the relationship between these two fields of study, we can work toward more just communities. Therefore, relevant communication studies literature should be further integrated with SCM in order to further our understanding of effective leadership development.

Finally, the author asks readers to consider the following question: Why is explicit leadership development not a standard component of our nation's primary education system? It is true that accomplishing such a lofty goal would be a complex task—gathering political support, securing funds, passing legislation, implementing a leadership development model on a massive scale, etc. However, it is clear that our nation is facing a social and political crisis that has largely been caused—or at the very least, fueled—by our collective lack of leadership, communication, and collaboration skills. American institutions expect their graduates to become leaders and make positive contributions to society, yet most students leave these institutions without having ever experienced any form of explicit leadership development. As a result, the majority of American youth are never taught how to communicate and collaborate with one another; how to identify and work toward a common purpose; how to navigate disagreement in a civil and respectful manner.

Young people will be more inclined to practice effective leadership when our formal education system prioritizes the development of associated skills. Education is not a zero-sum environment; increasing focus on leadership development does not mean that our education system needs to decrease the time and resources already attributed to other topics. Alternatively, scholars, teachers, administrators, and other educators could collaborate to identify the implicit leadership development opportunities in academic contexts and come up with the most effective practices for exploiting those learning opportunities by making them more explicit—much like this paper suggests youth basketball coaches do within their programs.

The American education system continues to teach these skills and competencies informally, leaving them on the periphery of our curriculum by relying on implicit rather than explicit leadership development opportunities. Because our education system treats the

development of these skills as secondary, so do young people—they tend to assume that leadership skills, communication skills, and other related “soft” skills are not as important as the traditional knowledge taught in primary education. Unfortunately, it is hard to blame them—if leadership skills and competencies are not prioritized by our formal education system, what reason do youth have to prioritize them?

If young people do not prioritize and value the development of effective leadership skills, how will they ever realize the potential of our democracy? The author argues that they will not. Therefore, our nation—and more specifically, those responsible for shaping its primary education system—should explore the best methods for implementing an explicit leadership development model such as SCM in our primary education system in order to provide more young people with the values, skills, and competencies needed to build and sustain a more just, equitable, and inclusive society.

## CHAPTER IX: CONCLUSION

The Netflix miniseries *Chimp Empire* follows the lives of the Ngogo chimpanzees, the largest group of chimpanzees ever known to man. The series explores the complex social dynamics of the chimpanzee community, including the relationships between males and females, parents and children, and rivals. Episode two of the series is focused on the conflict and division between the “Central” Ngogo group, the largest in Uganda’s Kibale National Park, and the “Westerners,” who are the second largest group and share a border with the Central chimpanzees. In the beginning of the episode, a few of the Westerners are shown patrolling their territory. As explained by the narrator, acclaimed actor Mahershala Ali:

Patrolling is partly about guarding resources, but that's not all. Chimps will always try to expand their territory if they can. And they do it by finding and attacking rivals. Like humans, chimpanzees are social creatures. But unlike us, their ability to form relationships is limited to members of their own group. They are inescapably territorial and tribal. It's in their nature to compete for resources. And to see chimps from rival groups as others, to be attacked and destroyed. Chimpanzee life is a never-ending conflict. (Houghton & Reed, 2023)

While Ali implies that humans have the capacity to form relationships with others who are different from us, I argue that we collectively lack the values, skills, and competencies needed to take full advantage of that capacity. This has brought our species to an evolutionary crossroads of sorts—should we continue down a path of domination, division, and oppression, like the Ngogo chimps? Or should we reevaluate what it takes to fully embrace our humanity; to take advantage of our capacity to form mutually beneficial, respectful, collaborative relationships with other humans even though they may not come from our “own group”?

A large percentage of modern social, political, and economic issues can be traced back to our inability to get along with individuals who look different, act different, sound different, or come from a different place than us. As a result of our biological conditioning, we tend to perceive these differences as a threat rather than as an opportunity for growth. Our species has historically viewed those who are different as something to be conquered, defeated, or controlled, and as we have evolved, we have built increasingly complex structures, rules, and weapons to maintain that control. Maybe this is humanity's fatal flaw—historically, the members of our species who have been able to prove themselves as smarter, stronger, better, and/or more valuable than others have thrived. While this has led to the creation of many great societies and unique cultures, it has also resulted in a significant amount of oppression. Fortunately, as Mahershala Ali notes, humans have the capacity to override this evolutionary flaw.

We are capable of determining our fate more so than any other species left on this planet, as we have significant agency over the decisions that will shape our society's future. Do we want to continue these same cycles of dominance and oppression that have ruled our planet for centuries, or should we recognize the current state of affairs as an opportunity to pivot; to create an environment where everyone can connect with one another and collaborate with one another in spite of our differences? Should we continue to allow our differences to separate us, or should we learn to use those differences as an opportunity to learn from one other's unique and valuable perspectives?

Now is the time to make a change, and the most influential medium for making that change is to appropriately adapt and modernize the way we educate youth to overcome contemporary societal challenges. However, given the reluctance of formal education institutions to implement explicit leadership development curriculum, I argue that youth would benefit from

engaging in leadership development opportunities in other contexts—such as youth basketball. If we refuse to adjust our strategy for educating young people—if we continually fail to teach them the values and skills needed to address these issues of division—then they will continue to lack the competencies needed to collaborate with one another in order to fulfill the potential of our democracy; to navigate our differences in a civil and constructive manner; to identify and work toward a common purpose.

As a species, we must rid ourselves of the notion that the differences between us make others “worse,” less human, or less valuable than we are. We must stop interpreting our differences as a reason to hate, and instead view them as opportunities for growth, learning, and increased understanding. In order to do so, we must be equipped with the proper tools needed to communicate and collaborate effectively with others in spite of our differences. This paper shows how—even if on a small, communal level—youth basketball coaches can use the principles of servant leadership theory in conjunction with SCM to use the game of basketball as a platform for serving the common good and providing young people with the values, skills, and competencies needed to build and sustain a more just, equitable, and inclusive society.

Between 2015 and 2020, U.S. basketball participation among 6- to 17-year-olds stood at more than 11 million individuals (Spanberg, 2023). This partially explains why basketball is such a good context for implementing a model like SCM; not only have youth sports been shown to be a fitting context for leadership development, but basketball is also an extremely accessible and popular sport among young people, which suggests that further research in this area has the potential to impact a significant number of young people.

Most importantly, this research will empower me to serve athletes the way I want to. As a young athlete, my basketball coaches used the game as a platform for teaching me life lessons

and helping me develop as a leader. For this reason, my intentions as a youth basketball coach have less to do with winning games and developing jump shots, and more to do with empowering young people to become successful, collaborative leaders who are both inspired and prepared to make positive contributions to society. As a coach, I believe that winning basketball games at the youth level is a byproduct of doing things the right way, and thus does not need to be the focus of every second of organized practice time. When a coach cares about the individual development of each athlete and seeks to provide them with the tools and knowledge needed to collaborate effectively with one another in order to properly function as a team, only then will each individual—and the group as a whole—be able to realize their full potential. In other words, I do not see youth basketball as “just a game”—I interpret it as a platform for developing socially responsible leaders who are not only inspired to contribute to the common good, create positive social change, and fulfill the potential of our democracy, but are also properly equipped with the values, skills, and competencies needed to do so. That’s what the Higher Education Research Institute wanted; that’s what Robert Greenleaf wanted; and that’s what I want to do as a youth basketball coach. I am confident that this research will empower me to do just that.

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