

**AN ANALYSIS OF FACTORS USED BY STUDENTS AT PURDUE UNIVERSITY TO
SELECT A SERVANT LEADER OR PRIMUS INTER PARES FROM AMONG GROUP
MEMBERS.**

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Abstract

In the Spring of 2003, students in the class titled Applied Leadership participated in a leadership development activity that helps students explore the concepts and principles of Servant leadership. In addition to helping students explore servant leadership concepts the exercise addressed the call by FRH to conduct discovery activities to validate a growing literature base on servant leadership. This paper outlines the student activity and discusses preliminary findings of the discovery activity.

An analysis of factors used by students at Purdue University to select a Servant Leader or Primus Inter Pares from among group members

In their paper, "Servant Leadership: Setting the Stage for Empirical Research" Myra L. Farling, Gregory Stone, and Bruce Winston (1999) explore in detail the literature on servant leadership and they advance a five variable model for servant leadership that includes 1. Vision (Bennis, 1997; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Burns, 1978; Greenleaf, 1977, 1996) 2. Influence (Bass, 1990; Festinger, 1954) 3. Credibility (Bass, 1990; Kouzes & Posner, 1993) 4. Trust (Gaston, 1987; Greenleaf, 1977; Kouzes and Posner, 1993) and 5. Service (Akuchie, 1993; Gaston, 1987, Greenleaf, 1977; Snodgrass, 1993). The authors explore Servant Leadership theory in detail but they leave the reader with a dilemma in that they close their paper with the challenge "There exists a need to establish empirical support for the root sources of the values that servant leaders possess. Consequently, the authors encourage other researchers to join in the empirical studies required to advance this stream of literature to its next phase of maturation (Farling, Stone, Winston, 1999)."

According to Robert Greenleaf's (1977) foundational text on Servant Leadership natural servant leaders are persons who understand they are servants first. Consequently, they are more likely to define and strive to meet the "highest priority needs" of others, "than is the person who is leader first and who later serves out of the prompting of conscience or in conformity with normative expectations" (p. 14). Additionally, Greenleaf (1977) goes on to say "the servant leader is servant first ... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead ... The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant -- first to make sure that other people's highest -- priority needs are being served. The best test, and the most difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit or, at least, not be further deprived (pp. 13-14)?" A key principle developed by Greenleaf is that a servant leader is the first among equals (Primus Inter Pares) and ultimately sees him or herself in that role.

In the Spring of 2003 an activity in the Applied Leadership course of Dr. Homan at Purdue University was conducted to allow students to explore the basic concepts of Servant Leadership and the variables proposed by Farling, Stone, and Winston. The context of the class activity centered around students selecting a Primus Inter Pares (Primus) from among group members.

Over an eight week period 63 groups (approximately 10 students per group) were required to review and prepare a 20-30 min classroom presentation regarding an assigned

Harvard case study and in the same group prepare a group written analysis paper of another assigned case (Disneyland Paris). At four points during the last 5 weeks of the semester students were required to vote fellow group members out of contention for final Primus. The final Primus had the special duty of assigning the groups accumulated bonus points to individual group members in any way they decided was appropriate including self hoarding. Since the activity is designed to reinforce the first among equals principle the group had the final vote to accept or reject the Primus' plan. If the group vetoed the Primus' plan all points were lost to the group.

In order to apply the Farling, Stone, and Winston model each group member was allowed to indicate using a 10 point scale how they felt about the person they most wanted to vote out of contention for Primus in the areas of visioning, credibility, trust, and service. The expectation of the activity was that as the pool of candidates for ultimate Primus shrunk the qualities of those remaining would more likely reflect the model of Servant Leadership as proposed by Farling, Stone, and Winston.

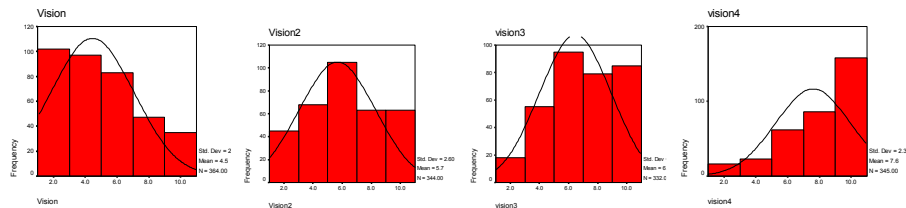
Visioning

In regards to the variable of visioning the students indicated that on average group members voted out of contention for Primus early in the term demonstrated the quality of visioning less than those selected later in the term. It can also be seen in the chart below that the distribution was greater in the early stages of the voting but toward the end of term aligned more to the higher end of the scale.

Results - Visioning

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Vision	364	1.00	10.00	4.4505	2.62543
Vision2	344	1.00	10.00	5.6715	2.60403
vision3	332	1.00	10.00	6.4669	2.46586
vision4	345	1.00	10.00	7.6029	2.35917
Valid N (listwise)	331				



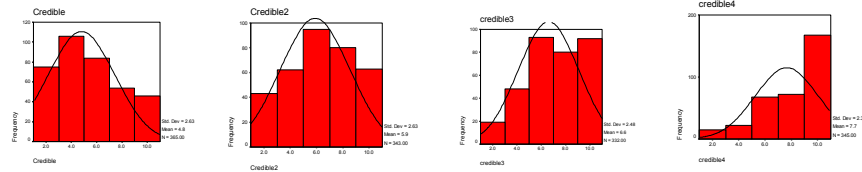
Credible

In regards to the variable of credibility the students indicated that on average group members voted out of contention for Primus early in the term demonstrated the quality of being credible less than those selected later in the term. It can also be seen that the distribution was greater in the early stages of the voting but toward the end aligned more to the higher end of the scale.

Results - Credible

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Credible	365	1.00	10.00	4.8055	2.62866
Credible2	343	1.00	10.00	5.8921	2.63413
credible3	332	1.00	10.00	6.5964	2.48252
credible4	345	1.00	10.00	7.6551	2.38695
Valid N (listwise)	331				



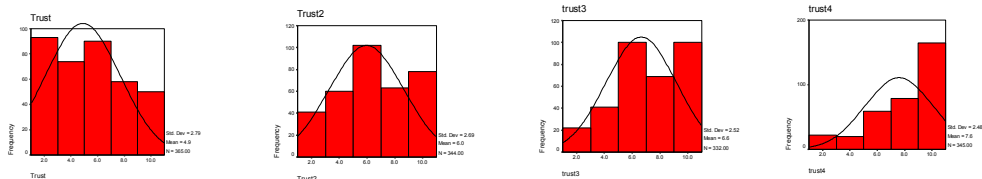
Trust

In regards to the variable of Trust the students indicated that those voted out of contention for Primus early in the term demonstrated the quality of being trustworthy less than those selected later in the term. As seen in previous variables the distribution was greater in the early stages of the voting but toward the end aligned more to the higher end of the scale.

Results - Trust

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Trust	365	1.00	10.00	4.8904	2.79108
Trust2	344	1.00	10.00	5.9622	2.69029
trust3	332	1.00	10.00	6.6476	2.51987
trust4	345	1.00	10.00	7.5913	2.47979
Valid N (listwise)	332				



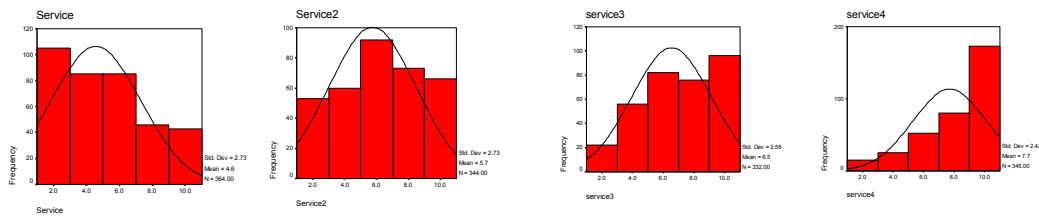
Service

In regards to the variable of Service students indicated that on average those voted out of contention for Primus early in the term demonstrated the quality of a service orientation less than those selected later in the term. Consistent with the previous variables the distribution was greater in the early stages of the voting but toward the end aligned more to the higher end of the scale.

Results - Service

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Service	364	1.00	10.00	4.5687	2.72590
Service2	344	1.00	10.00	5.7384	2.73219
service3	332	1.00	10.00	6.5452	2.57593
service4	345	1.00	10.00	7.7159	2.42214
Valid N (listwise)	331				



Conclusion

The overwhelming evidence indicates support for the model proposed by Farling, Stone, and Winston (1999). The variables visioning, credibility, trust, and service all showed growth in the average ratings assigned to those being voted out of contention as the quality of the candidate pool was thinned and the final Primus or servant leader was closer to being chosen. This study is a positive step toward developing empirical support for the Farling, Stone, and Winston model but due to the limitation put on this activity as a class project vs. a formal research study additional effort is needed.

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