Spiritual Leadership as an Integrating Paradigm for Servant Leadership

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Abstract

Spiritual leadership is an emerging paradigm that has the potential to guide organizational transformation and development of positive organizations where human well-being and organizational performance can not only coexist, but can be maximized. First, the emerging fields of positive organizational scholarship and workplace spirituality are discussed as two areas within the field of organization studies that have important implications for servant leadership. Next, the emerging theory and research on servant leadership is examined and extended using spiritual leadership theory. Then, four issues not addressed by servant leadership models are identified. We then argue that spiritual leadership, by focusing on satisfying both leader and follower spiritual needs for calling and membership through vision, hope/faith, and the values of altruistic love, addresses these issues and provides insights for servant leadership theory, research, and practice. Finally, legacy leadership is presented as a more specific model of spiritual leadership for servant leadership development.

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Introduction

Contemporary organizations are facing intense pressure from two fronts. Externally, organizations are now operating in an environment that has become increasing complex and much more dynamic. The dramatic globalization of economic activity during the last twenty years and the democratization of technology have been the fuel driving the changes. Thus, organizations must now compete in a boundaryless economy with worldwide labor markets that are instantly linked with information. These changes call for new organizations that are more agile.

To confront the external challenge contemporary organizations must create work environments that will help them attract, keep and motivate a team of high-performing employees. The creation of work environments that provide a sense of challenge and meaningfulness for employees has become a priority. The creation of such a work environment may very well be the strategic imperative of the new millenium. This perspective has been articulated by Whetten and Cameron (1998) who concluded that "good people management" is more important than all other factors in predicting profitability.

These employee demands have been summarized by Pfeffer (2003) who identifies four fundamental dimensions that people seek in the workplace: "(1) interesting work that permits them to learn, develop, and have a sense of competence and mastery, (2) meaningful work that provides some feeling of purpose, (3) a sense of connection and positive social relations with their coworkers, and (4) the ability to live an integrated life, so that one's work role and other roles are

not inherently in conflict and so that a person's work role does not conflict with his or her essential nature and who the person is as a human being" (p.32).

Responding to these challenges will require an organizational transformation that will simultaneously improve organizational effectiveness while addressing the need for an expanded view of employee well-being (French, Bell, & Zawacki, 2000). Two streams of thought are emerging within the field of organizational studies that have important implications for organization transformation: positive organizational scholarship and workplace spirituality. The foundation of these studies have been presented in the recent publication of three handbooks: *Handbook of Positive Psychology* (Snyder & Lopez, 2001), *Positive Organizational Scholarship: Foundations of a New Discipline* (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003) and the *Handbook of Workplace Spirituality and Organizational Performance* (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003).

We believe that spiritual leadership theory (SLT; Fry, 2003) provides a powerful framework for addressing this need. SLT is a causal theory of spiritual leadership based on vision, altruistic love and hope/faith that is grounded in an intrinsic motivation theory. Spiritual leadership taps into the fundamental needs of both leader and follower for spiritual survival through calling – a sense that one's life has meaning and makes a difference - and membership – a sense that one is understood, appreciated, and accepted unconditionally (Fleischman, 1994; Maddock & Fulton, 1998). The purpose of spiritual leadership is to create vision and value congruence across the individual, empowered team, and organization levels and, ultimately, foster higher levels of both organizational commitment and productivity.

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Recently, Fry (2005a) extended spiritual leadership theory by exploring the concept of positive human health and psychological well-being through recent developments and scientific research on workplace spirituality, character ethics, positive psychology and spiritual leadership. These areas provide a consensus on the values, attitudes, and behaviors necessary for positive human health and psychological well-being (Fry, 2005a). Ethical well-being is defined as living one's values, attitudes, and behavior from the inside-out in creating a principled-center congruent with the universal, consensus values inherent in spiritual leadership theory (Cashman, 1998; Covey, 1991; Fry, 2003).

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Insert Tables 1 & 2 About here

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In this paper, we offer spiritual leadership as a paradigm that addresses the challenges faced by contemporary organizations. Then we discuss servant leadership as a connection between POS and workplace spirituality, especially in relation to Patterson's (2003) concept of servant leadership as a virtuous theory. A central premise is that expanding the borders on servant leadership perspectives requires a focus on four key issues that can be addressed using spiritual leadership theory as an integrating framework: 1) the universal or consensus values that are necessary for servant leadership; 2) the role of servant leadership in achieving congruent and consistent values, attitudes, and behavior across the individual, group, and organizational levels; 3) the personal outcomes or rewards of servant leadership for both leaders and followers; and 4) the apparent contradiction for organizational performance when the servant leadership model of service places the highest priority on the needs and purposes of individual followers above the goals and

objectives of the organization. Finally, to enhance our understanding of servant leadership and

address the limitations of existing models, legacy leadership is offered as a more specific model

within the spiritual leadership paradigm (Fry, 2003, 2005a, 2005b; Fry & Matherly, 2006; Malone

& Fry, 2003; Fry, Vitucci, & Cedillo, 2005; Whittington et al., 2005). Finally, we discuss the

practice of servant leadership at TDIndustries as an example of an organization that has successfully

implemented the principles advocated by the spiritual leadership models.

Servant Leadership

The principles of spiritual leadership theory are present in current discussions of servant

leadership. The contemporary concept of servant leadership is best summarized in the works of

Robert Greenleaf (1977; 1998). For Greenleaf, the servant-leader is servant-first, an attitude that

flows from a deep-rooted, natural inclination to serve. The conscious choice to lead comes after the

desire to serve. Thus, Greenleaf distinguishes between those who would be "leader-first" and those

who are "servant-first." In fact, for Greenleaf, these two are extreme types that form the anchors of

a leadership continuum. The defining difference between the two is the concern taken by the

servant-first to make sure that others' highest priority needs are being served. This distinction is

captured in Greenleaf's (1977) "test" for those who would be identified as servant-leaders:

> "The best test, and most difficult to administer, is this: 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).

Servant-leaders emphasize the development and elevation of followers (Ciulla, 1998).

However, a potential criticism of servant leadership is that it focuses solely on the individual needs

of employees, which may or may not be to the benefit of the organization. This distinction was

identified by Stone, Russell, and Patterson (2004) who proposed that the transformational leader is

ultimately focused on organizational objectives, whereas the servant leader is focused on followers, with the achievement of organizational goals as a subordinate outcome. Bass (2000) as well as Stone et al. (2004) and Patterson, Redmer, and Stone (2003) posit that while transformational leaders seek the well-being of the organization, servant leaders seek the well-being of the follower/employee, even at the expense of the organization. Although servant leaders focus on the followers there is a focus on performance but it is follower-driven rather than leader-driven as supported by Winston's (2004) case study in which followers make a decision to altruistically support the desires of the leader. In addition, Winston's case study also showed the importance of the follower's commitment to the organization, which produces follower orientation toward benefiting the organization. Performance results from the followers' intrinsic and self-directed behaviors rather than through the leader's influence using positive and negative rewards.

Research on servant leadership

In general the conceptual and empirical research on servant leadership to date support our proposition that servant leader must adopt the universal consensus values that are central to the spiritual leadership paradigm (Fry, 2005b). Greenleaf (1977) coined the term "servant leadership." However, for two decades following Greenleaf's presentation of servant leadership little academic consideration of the concept occurred. Following Farling, Stone, and Winston's (1999) call for empirical research on the concept of servant leadership the literature has been expanded by conceptual (Page & Wong, 2000; Patterson, 2003; Winston, 2003; Winston & Ryan, 2007) and factor analytic studies (Laub, 1999; Dennis & Winston, 2003; Sendjaya, 2003; Liden, Wayner, Zhao, & Henderson 2005; Barbuto & Wheeler. 2006; Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005).

Conceptual studies by Page and Wong (2000), Patterson (2003) and Winston (2004) posit that servant leaders and servant followers are characterized by moral love for others, humility,

altruism, trust, and a commitment to the leader. Factor analytic studies by Laub (1999), Dennis and

Winston (2003), Sendjaya (2003), Liden, Wayner, Zhao, and Henderson (2005), Barbuto and

Wheeler (2006), as well as Dennis and Bocarnea (2005) resulted in distinct factors including (note

that the items listed do not show the duplication of others research results):

> 1. Emotional healing; creating value for the community; conceptual skills; empowering, helping subordinates grow and succeed, putting subordinates first, behaving ethically (Liden, Wayner, Zhao, & Henderson, 2004),

> 2. Wisdom; persuasive mapping; organizational stewardship; altruistic calling, emotional healing (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006),

> 3. Altruism, service to others, hope, integrity, accountability, transcendent spirituality (Sendjaya, 2003),

> 4. Trust, empowerment, vision (Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005),

> 5. Listening (Dennis and Winston, 2003).

Laub's (1999) instrument measured the servant-led organization rather than the servant

leader. Laub's factors include: providing and sharing leadership, developing community and people,

valuing people. Winston's (2004) case study showed the interaction of follower-focus and leader-

focus models through the qualitative exploration of how Patterson's (2003) and Winston's models

of servant leadership work to produce a balance of follower and leader focus in the organization,

thus explaining how a servant leader's focus on followers causes followers to focus on the leader.

Legacy Leadership: A Model of Spiritual Leadership

Recently Whittington and his associates (Whittington, Pitts, Kageler, & Goodwin,

2005) have developed a model of spiritual leadership they refer to as legacy leadership (See

Figure 4). Legacy leadership incorporates and extends the characteristics of servant

leadership and is consistent with spiritual leadership theory (Fry, 2003; Fry & Whittington,

2005). The most basic premise of legacy leadership is that legacy leaders must exhibit the

values and attitudes of spiritual leadership and that a legacy leader's behavior is consistent with his/her internal motivation – and these motives are in turn anchored to an external standard and vision based on selfless service.

In the legacy leadership framework, "changed lives" provides a measure of the leader's influence on the lives of their followers. From the perspective of legacy leadership, the changes in followers' lives will be internal first. Followers of legacy leaders internalize the motives and values they perceive in the leader. This internalization may result in a shift from egotistical to altruistic motives, or a strengthening of already existing altruistic motives. Values also may shift such that leaders are not viewed as providing only instrumental value to followers' lives, but also as having intrinsic value (Covey, 1991; Goodwin, Whittington, & Bowler, 2004). These internal changes in motives and values will result in changed attitudes toward the organization (job satisfaction, commitment), and in outward behaviors such as increased performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, and other pro-social behaviors. Thus, legacy leadership addresses the need for a leadership model that results in an organizational transformation that impacts the well-being of individual employees and also results in positive organizational outcomes.

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The Practice of Spiritual Leadership Theory

Clearly, spiritual leadership theory, along with the legacy leadership and servant-leadership models, offers a set of moral and inspirational models of leadership (Graham, 1991). The purpose of this section is to examine the practice of the principles of spiritual leadership theory that

TDIndustries has consistently practiced and call attention to the success they have experienced as a result of institutionalizing these practices.

Throughout its history, TDIndustries has demonstrated a strong commitment to the philosophy of servant-leadership by ensuring that the highest priority needs of others are served. This approach to management has enabled TDIndustries to successfully make the transitions necessary for its survival during difficult times, while fostering growth during good times. As a result, TDIndustries has sustained its business, experienced profit growth, and increased the satisfaction of employees – who they refer to as partners – for more than five decades. External validation of their success is evidenced in surveys conducted by the Hay group, Watson Wyatt, and Fortune Magazine (Whittingtom & Maellaro, 2006). In fact, the company has been named to Fortune magazine's 100 Best Companies to Work For since the inception of the list in 1998, earning TDIndustries a spot in Fortune's Best Companies Hall of Fame (2005).

TDIndustries' dedication to servant-leadership began many years ago when founder Jack Lowe, Sr. developed a leadership approach based on his religious convictions. He was a natural servant-leader (Whittington & Maellaro, 2006) and his innate belief was that the responsibility of a leader was to build an organization by facilitating the achievement of employees' personal and professional career goals, thereby resulting in a successful enterprise. It was not until several years later, when he came across Greenleaf's pamphlet, "The Servant as Leader," that he found a structure for the beliefs and values he had held since his childhood (Cheshire & Graham, 2000). These beliefs and values are clearly values based in altruistic love espoused by spiritual leadership theory.

Servant-leadership and the process of achieving value congruence across organizational levels inherent in spiritual leadership (Fry, 2003, 2005a) is at the core of the TDIndustries' culture.

Since 1971 the company has used Robert Greenleaf's essay "The Servant as a Leader" as a blueprint for organizational behavior. The central idea is that both partners and leaders serve the institution for a higher purpose beyond any personal or individual gain. TDIndustries' commitment to servant-leadership over the years has created an environment of mutual trust and respect between employees and leaders. Employees know that the company's leaders are genuinely interested in and will listen to their ideas, and leadership has learned to depend upon and heed input from employees.

According to Jack Lowe Jr. (Whittington & Maellaro, 2006) there are four elements of servant-leadership that are continuously emphasized at TDIndustries:

- Being a servant first, making sure that other people's needs are served

- Serving through listening

- Serving through people building

- Serving through leadership creation

The outcome of maximizing both human well-being and organizational performance in spiritual leadership is also evident. The servant first principle is demonstrated in the TDIndustries vision statement which inverts the normal emphasis placed on customers and addresses the needs of employees first: "We are committed to providing outstanding career opportunities by exceeding our customers' expectations through continuous aggressive improvement." To ensure this emphasis is followed, Greenleaf's test is used as a benchmark for evaluating the effectiveness of the organization. In fact, the growth and development of partners is one of the criteria used to evaluate and compensate managers (Whittington & Maellaro, 2006). The commitment to making sure others' needs are being met is also demonstrated through TDIndustries' diligent use of employee opinion surveys. While survey results provide the company with an internal benchmark, the results of this annual survey are also compared to several national employee surveys. The second element,

the practice of serving through listening to employees, began humbly in the Lowe family home, when Jack Sr. would invite employees in to discuss critical issues and brainstorm ideas to solve business-related problems and opportunities. Open communication with employees is still very much a reality at TDIndustries today. All managers participate in regularly scheduled "listening forums" where senior leaders convene with small groups of TD partners in breakfast and lunch meetings every other week. Through these venues, each of 1,400 employees has an opportunity to share their views and suggestions with senior management at least once every two years.

In an effort to build people and create a leader-full culture they have created a four-course sequence called TD Leadership Development. This program is required for any partner who supervises others, has management responsibility, has significant customer interaction, or is a high-potential individual contributor. The first supervisory skills course provides the foundations for managerial effectiveness and the second course focuses on diversity awareness and how to use differences effectively. In the third course partners learn how leadership differs from management, how to lead the change process, and how to become people-builders by developing others. The final course in the sequence uses Covey's Seven Habits of Highly Effective People to teach partners to be proactive, set goals and priorities, develop win-win relationships, and to listen. In addition to these courses, members of the Strategic Planning Team and Leadership Council are offered access to "Leadership at the Peak" (through the Center for Creative Leadership), local MBA programs, and one-on-one sessions with the in-house industrial psychologist. Additionally, each of these individuals creates a personal training and development path based on the results of their Senior Servant-leadership Assessment and Development profile.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this paper we have demonstrated that the spiritual leadership theory paradigm specifically addresses four critical issues that are important for leaders who will lead the organizational transformation efforts demanded by the realities of the 21st century economy and workplace. First, SLT explicitly addresses the need for contemporary leaders to align their behaviors and beliefs with a set of universal or consensus values. Second, because spiritual leadership theory anchors the leader's individual values to a set of universal values around which there is an emerging scientific consensus, spiritual leadership theory, through the concept of ethical-well being, addresses a congruence deficiency seen in existing discussions of servant leadership. Those who operate from the foundation of spiritual leadership theory must seek to create an organizational culture that fosters congruent and consistent values, attitudes, and behavior across the individual, group, and organizational levels (See Figure 2). Third, the practice of spiritual leadership provides a framework for the achievement of high levels of human well-being in terms of the personal outcomes or rewards of servant leadership for both leaders and followers.

Fourth, as we see in the example of TDIndustries, leaders who build organizations using these servant leadership principles are able to overcome the apparent contradiction for organizational performance when the servant leadership model of service places the highest priority on the needs and purposes of individual followers above the goals and objectives of the organization. However, it is spiritual leadership theory that can explain how this apparent contradiction is resolved. Referencing Figure 2, it takes servant leadership to develop with followers the transcendent vision that taps into both leader and followers spiritual need for calling. Servant leaders also exhibit the values and attitudes of spiritual leadership through their legacy leadership motives and methods. The legacy leader's influence is then manifested through "changed lives" of

followers toward the values, attitudes, and behavior of altruistic love (See Figure 3). This in turn

taps into the leader and followers spiritual need for membership, which produces high levels of

human well-being. Satisfaction of these needs then combine to foster high levels of organizational

commitment and productivity, thereby simultaneously maximizing both human well-being and

organizational performance.

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Table 1.   Comparison of scholarly fields emphasizing values relating to ethical and spiritual well-being

Spiritual leadership (Fry, 2003)	Workplace spirituality (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003)	Religion (Smith, 1991; Kriger & Hanson, 1999)	Character ethics & education (Josephson, 2002)	Positive psychology (Snyder & Lopez, 2001)

Vision
 	
Hope/Faith
Altruistic Love:
 	
  Trust/Loyalty
Forgiveness/
  Acceptance/
  Gratitude
Integrity
Honesty
Courage
Kindness
Empathy/
  Compassion
Patience/
  Meekness/
  Endurance/
Excellence
Fun
	Honesty
	Forgiveness
	Hope
	Gratitude
	Humility
	Compassion
	Integrity
		Vision of Service/
		Letting Go of Self
		Honesty
		Veracity/Truthful-
		  ness
		Charity
		Humility
		Forgiveness
		Compassion
		Thankfulness/Grati-
		  tude
			Trustworthiness
			  Honesty
			  Integrity
			  Reliability
			    (Promise
			    Keeping)
			  Loyalty
			Respect
			  Civility
			  Courtesy
			  Decency
			  Dignity
			  Autonomy
			  Tolerance
			  Acceptance
			Responsibility
			  Accountability
			  Excellence
			  Diligence
			Perseverance
			  Continuous
			   Improvement
			Fairness
			  Process
			  Impartiality
			  Equity
			Caring
			Citizenship
				Optimism
				Hope
				Humility
				Compassion
				Forgiveness
				Gratitude
				Love
				Altruism
				Empathy
				Toughness
				Meaningfulness
				
				Humor

Table 2 Universal Values of Spiritual Leadership

1. **TRUST/LOYALITY**- In my chosen relationships, I am faithful and have faith in and rely on the character, ability, strength and truth of others.

2. **FORGIVENESS/ACCEPTANCE/GRATITUDE** – I suffer not the burden of failed expectations, gossip, jealousy, hatred, or revenge. Instead, I choose the power of forgiveness through acceptance and gratitude. This frees me from the evils of self-will, judging others, resentment, self-pity, and anger and gives me serenity, joy and peace.

3. **INTEGRITY** – I walk the walk as well as talk the talk. I say what I do and do what I say.

4. **HONESTY** – I seek truth and rejoice in it and base my actions on it.

5. **COURAGE** –I have the firmness of mind and will, as well as the mental and moral strength, to maintain my morale and prevail in the face of extreme difficulty, opposition, threat, danger, hardship, and fear.

6. **HUMILTY** –I am modest, courteous, and without false pride. I am not jealous, rude or arrogant. I do not brag.

7. **KINDNESS** – I am warm-hearted, considerate, humane and sympathetic to the feelings and needs of others.

8. **EMPATHY/COMPASSION** - I read and understand the feelings of others. When others are suffering, I understand and want to do something about it.

9. **PATIENCE/MEEKNESS/ ENDURANCE**- I bear trials and/or pain calmly and without complaint. I persist in or remain constant to any purpose, idea, or task in the face of obstacles or discouragement. I pursue steadily any project or course I begin. I never quit in spite of counter influences, opposition, discouragement, suffering or misfortune.

10. **EXCELLENCE** - I do my best and recognize, rejoice in, and celebrate the noble efforts of my fellows.

11. **FUN** - Enjoyment, playfulness, and activity must exist in order to stimulate minds and bring happiness to one's place of work. I therefore view my daily activities and work as not to be dreaded yet, instead, as reasons for smiling and having a terrific day in serving others.
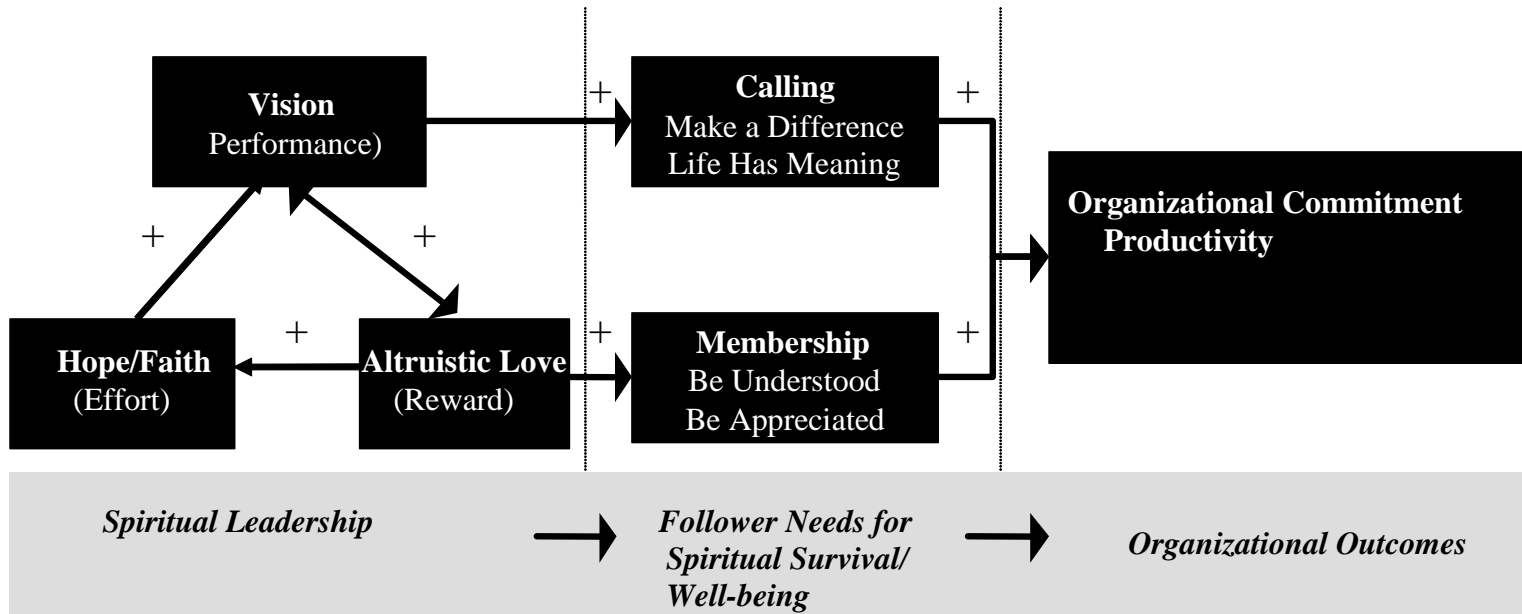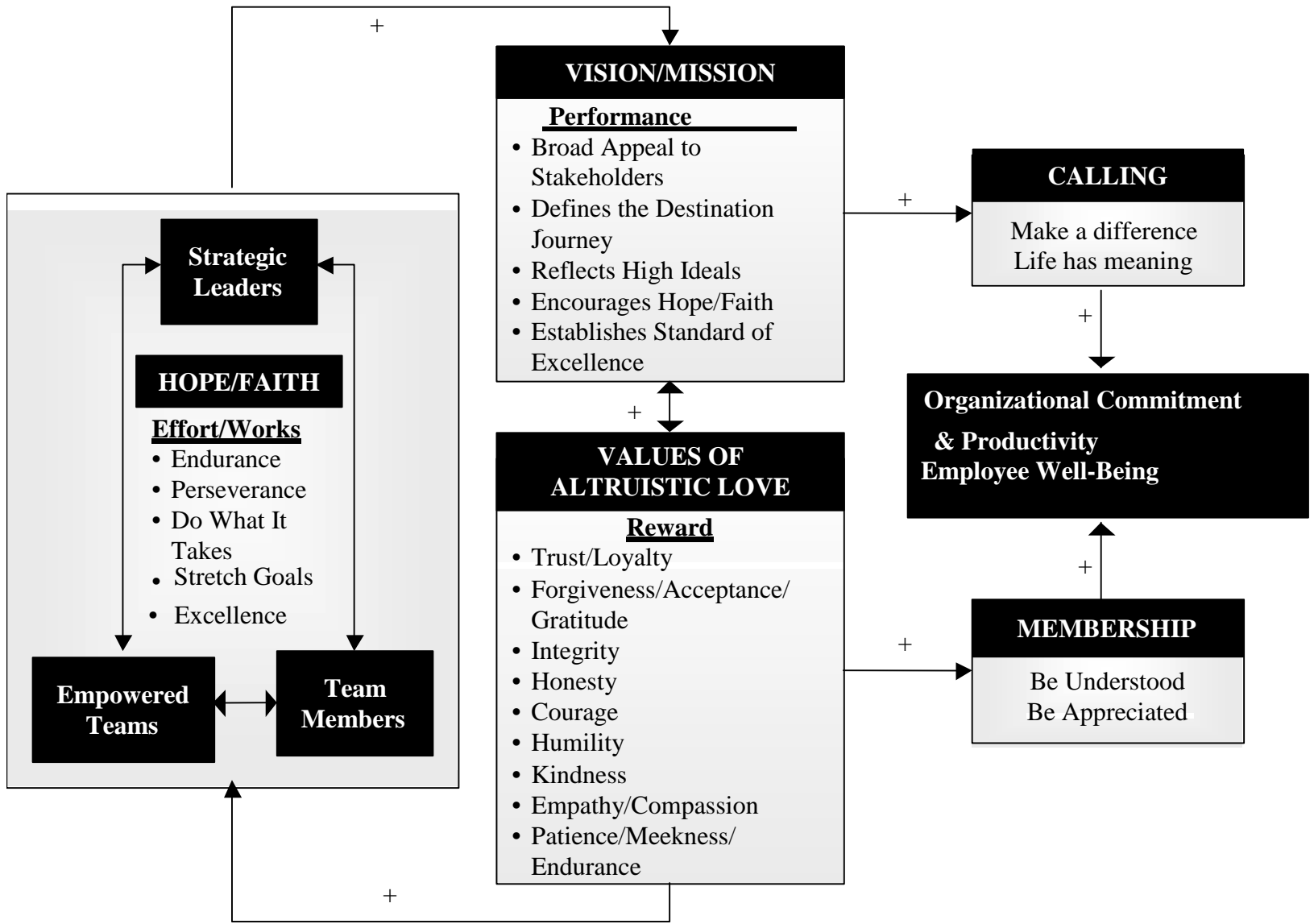
Figure 1. Causal model of spiritual leadership
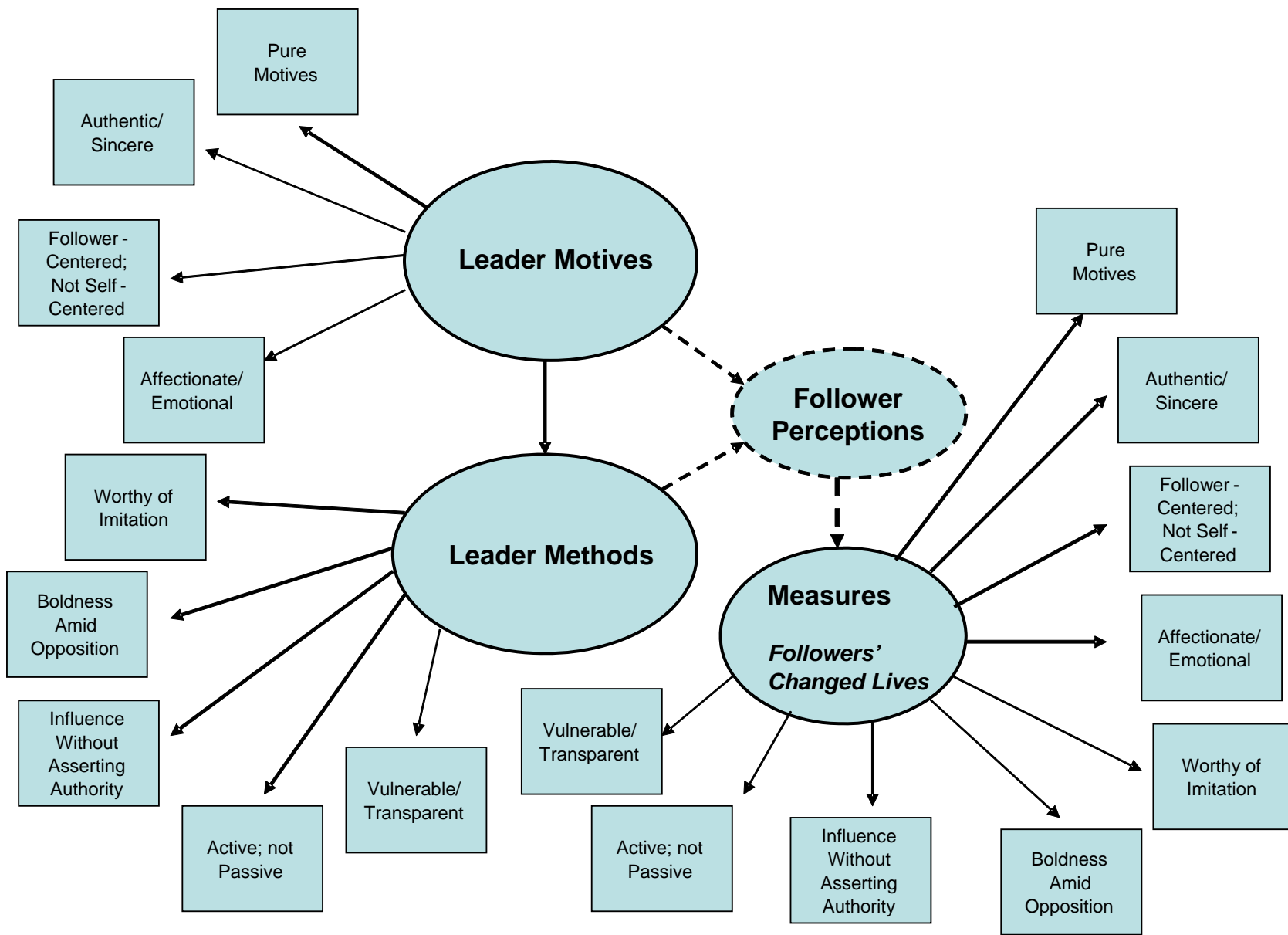
Figure 2. Expanded causal model of spiritual leadership

Figure 3. Legacy Leadership: A Spiritual Model of Leadership