Pathways for 21st century leadership: Exploring the convergence of servant and Māori leadership

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ABSTRACT
The world has become a turbulent space for leaders and organisations. Leadership scandals and failures have changed societal views on leadership behaviour. Consequently, there is increased demand for more ethical leadership, inspired by ideas of human-ness, and care of the well-being of all stakeholders. This paper offers our conceptualisation of servant and Indigenous Māori leadership respectively, as emerging domains within leadership theory that offer alternative approaches to those that are firmly embedded with Western leadership rhetoric. We propose there is a strong resonance between the two leadership domains and discuss the implications for leadership and organisation studies.

Keywords: Indigenous/Maori organisation, managing diversity, cross-cultural leadership authentic leadership
Hierarchical, traditional views of leadership are becoming less relevant, particularly given the complexities of the modern world, suggesting leadership theory must transition to new perspectives that take into account the complex needs of organisations today (Lichtenstein et al., 2006). Current leadership theory development is heavily influenced by earlier intellectual efforts of scholars, such as Knights & Willmott (1992, p. 761) who called for “new frameworks of interpretation which yield new or deeper understanding of processes to which the term ‘leadership’ is usually attributed”. Consequently, there are several emerging areas of ‘new leadership theory’ (Foldy et al., 2008) that advocate alternative approaches and interpretations of leadership practice (Ruwhiu & Cone, 2012; Spiller & Stockdale, 2013; Zhang, Cone, Everett, & Elkin, 2011). In this paper, our aim is to explore servant and Indigenous Māori leadership respectively, as emerging domains within leadership theory, each of which focuses on the human-ness or relational view of leadership, rather than the nature of leader activity and the classifications of roles (Yukl, 1989).

Attempts to define servant leadership have positioned its underlying leadership style as people-oriented, stressing personal integrity and service to others (Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008; Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004). Other attributes include stewardship, empowerment, building community, trust, honesty and appreciation of others (Russell & Stone, 2002), reflecting an altruistic ethic of care when thinking of servant leaders as serving those whom they are leading. There is also increasing interest in the connection between servant leadership and cross-cultural context (Hirschy, Gomez, Patterson, & Winston, 2012; Mittel & Dorfman, 2012; van Dierendonck, 2011), which draws us to the importance of cultural value systems. We suggest that to gain more meaningful understanding of servant leadership we must reflect on it as a value-oriented leadership style.

We will also investigate the value-rational logics that underlie systems of Māori leadership and provide basis for their action. Māori are tangata whenua, described here as people of the land in New Zealand, located in the South Pacific with a population predominantly of European descent. In relation to leadership rangatira is a Māori term used to denote chiefly status and it is often associated with the notion of leadership. Kaumātua, Māori elder, Manuhuia Bennett reflected on the notion of leadership when he stated “te kai a te rangatira he kōrero, the food of the rangatira is talk; te tohu o te
rangatira, he manaaki, the sign of a rangatira is being able to look after others, generosity; te mahi a te rangatira he whakatira i te iwi, the work of the rangatira is binding the iwi (Manuhuia Bennett – Te Pihopa Kaumātua (the Bishop, Kaumātua) as cited in Diamond, 2003, p.67). The statement of ‘he kōrero, he manaaki, he whakatira i te iwi’ draws us to the importance of communication, collaboration and connection as central features of the leadership role for rangatira in Māoridom. This is important to note because it suggests a unique system of leadership that is derived from cultural criteria that are bound to the norms, protocols, cultural traditions, kinship systems, economics, politics and social processes that still remain central features of life in Māori communities and organisations today (Durie, 2005). It is our contention therefore, that the culturally constituted nuances enacted in Māori leaderships’ socialised construction of identity and knowledge, is an appropriate context in which to develop our understanding of servant leadership further.

Our aim in this paper is not to provide a definitive definition of either leadership theories. Rather, we see it as a platform on which we base our initial thoughts regarding what ‘we think’ is the convergence of Indigenous Māori and servant leadership, and contributing to a deeper understanding of the nature of leadership in an increasingly turbulent and diverse world. We begin by presenting a brief review of the literature associated with servant and Māori leadership respectively to identify key characteristics. The following section then provides some reflection on touch-points between the two perspectives of leadership and offers a ‘first glance’ discussion on the implications for leadership theory development for the 21st Century.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

**Servant Leadership**

Robert Greenleaf’s (1977) foundational text ‘Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness’ introduced the notion of the leader as servant. Thus, began a stream of literature that located itself as an alternative to dominant views of leadership so deeply embedded in Western ethics. Spears (1996, p.33) offers an enduring description of servant leadership as “one
which is based on teamwork and community; one which seeks to involve others in decision making; one which is strongly based in ethical and caring behaviour; and one which is enhancing the growth of people, while at the same time improving the caring and quality of our many institutions”. Over the following years, a number of scholars have introduced several theoretical models of servant leadership to incorporate variables such as vision, influence, credibility, trust and service (Farling, Stone, & Winston, 1999), all of which lie in the conceptualisation of the notion of the need to serve (van Dierendonck, 2011). Table 1 provides an overview of the most prominent values attributed to servant leadership to date, which are by no means exhaustive, merely representative.

[Insert Table 1 – Values attributed to servant leadership]

Highlighting these values as foundational, van Dierendonck (2011) provides, with caution, a succinct précis of servant leader characteristics. Caution is warranted given the complexities involved in differentiating between models, concepts, attributes, antecedents and outcomes. Van Dierendonck (2011, p. 1232) identifies servant-leaders as those whom “empower and develop people; they show humility, are authentic, accept people for who they are, provide direction, and are stewards who work for the good of the whole”. A core characteristic of servant leadership is where the leader ‘goes beyond one’s self-interest’ (van Dierendonck, 2011). Therefore, servant leadership is considered to be a management philosophy which involves a comprehensive view of people, work and community. At its heart, servant leadership is anchored in the human drive to bond with others and contribute to the betterment of society, and motivated by empowering and developing people with empathy and humility (Mittel & Dorfman, 2012). The servant leader’s primary objective is to serve and meet the needs of others (Farling et al., 1999; Russell & Stone, 2002). Therefore, there is an innate sense of human-ness driving the logic associated with servant leadership. The person-oriented attitude enables safer, stronger and more sustainable relationships within the organisation (van Dierendonck, 2011).

The first empirical work undertaken was conducted by Laub (1999), developing a model and survey to measure six dimensions of servant leadership: developing people, shared leadership,
displaying authenticity, valuing people, providing leadership and building community. Continued interest as has seen further empirical studies (Hirschy et al., 2012; Liden et al., 2008; Mittel & Dorfman, 2012; Peterson, Galvin, & Lange, 2012; van Dierendonck, 2011) contributing to developing the field further. This suggest a much more holistic and spiritual perspective to understanding leadership practice (Farling et al., 1999) and research (Alvesson, 1996; Ruwhiu & Cone, 2012; Zhang et al., 2011).

Whether they are just a repertoire of behaviours that are a good idea in practice or are authentic behaviours built on values and a worldview will depend on the people involved. They are clearly different from a modern Western worldview, grounded in a communal culture that emphasises people, socially construed as whole people, complete in mind, body, emotion and spirit (Elkin & Sharma 2006, 2007). This perspective draws us to a worldview that emphasises leadership that reflects common humanity and stewardship of the communal good.

**Indigenous Māori leadership**

Māori leadership is described as a process of socialised experiences (instilling an innate sense of a special approach to leadership) and embedded relations (within iwi/tribal affiliation and whānau/familial relations) that are important features that constitute leadership specific to Māori (Ruwhiu & Cone, 2012). Spiller et al. (Spiller, Erakovic, Henare, & Pio, 2011; Spiller & Stockdale, 2013) also provide deeper insight into the spiritual, cultural and social processes that flourish within the domains of Māori leadership and organisation. The increasing proliferation of scholarly attention in the literature that is shaping deeper understanding of leadership and organisation from within the context of Te Ao Māori is a testament to its importance as an alternative perspective to leadership and organisation, but also the increasing strength of Indigenous Māori leadership and organisation in practice and research (for example see Haar, 2013; Haar & Delaney, 2009; Ruwhiu & Cone, 2010; Spiller, Pio, Henare, & Erakovic, 2011). As a domain of knowledge, Māori leadership is not a new phenomenon. As with Indigenous peoples worldwide, Māori have always led and installed leadership
qualities in their people. At the centre of which has always been the cultural values that embody Te Ao Māori, the Māori world.

Te Ao Māori, or the Māori world, locates Māori philosophy, ethics and knowledge (wisdom) in a central role, and is therefore foundational to Māori thinking and practice (Marsden, 2003). Key to this understanding of the world is a value rational pragmatism grounded in the assumption that the whole world is an integrated system (Ruwhiu & Cone, 2010). This perspective of the world encapsulates the way in which people perceive and understand the world and therefore situate the logic that guides practice (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), which in this instance is kaupapa Māori. Kaupapa Māori is described as “the Māori way” (Henry & Pene, 2001: 235), a term used to describe traditional Māori ways of doing, being and thinking that is informed by collective and intergenerational wisdom embodied by Te Ao Māori, the Māori world. Henare (2001) describes a Māori worldview as embodying principles of ‘tapu’, which recognises the essential potency of those things held to be sacred; ‘mana’, a religious power, authority and ancestral efficacy emerging in the social world; ‘mauri’, the energy that animates all living organisms; ‘wairua’, depicted as a spirit akin to a soul and all things in creation have one; and ‘hau’ described as a complex totalising system of exchange beginning with the gods, creation and social relationships.

We accept the difficulties associated with the summing up of a complex values-based system of relations, exchange and beliefs that underpin any articulation of a worldview, but suggest that it is important to identify the set of deeply embedded Māori values distinctive to Māori knowledge (Table 2). These Māori values provide the thread of continuity which integrates and holds together the social fabric of Māori culture (Marsden, 2003), providing continuity in the transmission of cultural meaning and practice within the community. Taken together, these ethics inform traditional Māori ontology and assumptions about human nature; that is, ‘what is real’ for Māori (Henry & Pene, 2001), and hold symbolic meaning for the pursuit of knowledge in contemporary Māori generations (Royal, 1996).

[insert Table 2 – Māori values at the heart of Te Ao Māori]
Therefore, Māori leadership draws from a culturally constituted form of practice heavily
influenced by their worldview and providing the basis for recognising relationships between
individuals and provides insight into a Māori worldview that represents the sacredness of all things
and the significance of reciprocity in human relations (Henare, 2001). For a comprehensive
conceptualisation of how values might influence Māori leadership, Spiller & Stockdale (2013)
provide a succinct summary of how Indigenous Māori conceptualisations of ‘life energies’ can
influence leadership and organisation practice. They present five ‘energies’ connected to Te Ao
Māori, as whakapapa (genealogies), wairua (spirituality), mana (inherited and endowed authority),
mauri (life force), and hau (reciprocity). The practices which they advocate are people-oriented and
constructed primarily for the care and well-being of the people in the organisation. In this context
Māori leaders are accountable to their collective in less hierarchical authoritarian and more open,
honest and caring ways. It is recognising that it is the mana, or power and authority vested in a leader
gives it a communal aspect. Thus it can be ascertained that Māori leadership incorporates an element
of ‘responsibility to’ the staff and broader community, not as a hierarchal structure necessarily
(Ruwhiu & Cone, 2012).

LEADERSHIP THEORY DEVELOPMENT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Almost all of the prevailing leadership theories of the past century are constructed on North American
and Western European sociological assumptions and ethical perspectives (Zhang et al., 2011).
However, interest in alternatives to Western (largely secular and white!) ways of thinking and
articulating leadership is growing, particularly in what we will call the majority world. That is, the
bulk of the world that is not in thrall to a Western secular worldview and returning to their own
locally generated knowledge, embodied by their cultural and social roots (Ibarra-Colado, 2006). In
addition, this seeming acceptance of alternative ways of approaching leadership has also been
partially driven by the slowing down of economic success and confidence in the West, which have
brought to the fore the need for development of leaders who set aside behaviours of self-interest (Liden et al., 2008).

Paralleling this trend in leadership theory development has been the transition from universalism and moves towards a culturally multi-polar and dialectical world (Faria, Ibarra-Colado, & Guedes, 2010). The acceptance of alternative worldviews suggests that the representation and application of leadership theory and practice must be constructed in the contextualised/localised needs of the communities, and their worldview in which it is practiced (Ruwhiu & Cone, 2012). Non-Western worldviews, specifically those that embody ancient wisdoms have already been engaged with in modern organisation and leadership approaches, such as the Māori wisdom tradition (Ruwhiu & Cone, 2012; Spiller, Erakovic, et al., 2011), native American Indian (Warner & Grint, 2006) and indigenous Australian (Foley, 2008). Initial explorations within and across these cultural groupings show similar ideas in regards to the cosmological value system that embodies Indigenous leadership whereby past and present is connected; notions of common humanity; finding meaning for humans in mind, body, emotion and spirit; the social construction of identity and pragmatic approaches to truth and wisdom. In contrast, dominant thinking in leadership theory posits an individual as economically rational and self-focused with a short term orientation, working as a ‘cog’ in the organisational machine where decision making and power is exercised in a top-down process where it is assumed those at the top are wisest. Notions of identity that are cultural, emotional or spiritual are ignored and people dehumanised and treated like objects. It is our contention that both Indigenous and servant leadership challenge these assumptions.

Table 3 represents our ‘initial glance’ at the underlying values that drive leadership practice and the theory of servant leadership. It is not intended as a matrix that concretely defines the relationship between the two, but more so a starting point for further discussion and opportunity for research. It is important to note, we are also not suggesting a precise ‘fit’ either, as that would not appropriately capture the ‘living and emergent’ experiences of people-oriented leadership or the a cultural context of Te Ao Māori. Further research would be needed to explore, not only the
philosophical relationship at each intersection, but also to understand the practical considerations for leadership and organisation studies.

[Insert Table 3 – A first glance connection between Māori and servant leadership]

By focusing attention onto the Māori worldview, we are drawn naturally to the potential commonalities with other non-Western worldviews that provoke us to seek evidence for servant leadership in a whole range of Indigenous societies. We are interested in the work of Richardson, Sinha and Yaaper (2013) who speak about commonalities between Hindus and Islamic people and their understanding of work, spirituality and leadership. There are many opportunities in research involving Indigenous leadership. For example, leadership explored among New Zealand Māori, Pacific Island, North American Indian, and Indigenous Australians, which we argue will delineate Indigenous leadership as distinctly different from the dominant styles of Western secular leadership (Foley, 2008; Ruwhiu & Cone, 2012; Warner & Grint, 2006). Not only are they different to Western leadership they also share characteristics which are close to a model of servant leadership. If as we suspect there is a series of common assumptions, then servant leadership, in sharing many of them, may provide a way forward as the dominance of Western secular management declines with the economic power of the West.

Inevitably, research with communities located as ‘alternative to’ the dominant Western worldview reveals inadequacy in the logic and methods of functionalist epistemology and neo-positivist methodologies (Jack & Westwood, 2006). Indigenous communities have long disputed the integrity of research dominated by knowledge based on Western scientific discourse ignoring the rationale of traditional Indigenous based knowledge, which results in societies being classified through a system of representation that ignores the multiple traditions of knowledge and knowing (Bhabha, 1984; Smith, 1999). A consequence of which is the creation of artificial representations of cultural practices (Anderson, 1991; Bourdieu, 1977; Sen, 2006), or ‘epistemic coloniality’ where institutionalised theory is speaking for Indigenous peoples, but is in fact a weak translation of
traditional knowledge (Ibarra-Colado, 2006). A sign of the growing interest (or is that ‘un-rest’) is the proliferation of special issues appearing in academic journals, such as the March 2012 *Management and Organisation Review* special issue on Indigenous Management Research in China, publishing in the cross cultural leadership field. Such attention has realised significant advances in the development of Indigenous research methodologies that draw from their worldviews.

In New Zealand, an Indigenous paradigm in the form of kaupapa Māori research, which embodies action in Te Ao Māori, the Māori world, is research that gives full recognition to Māori cultural values and systems (Walker, Eketone, & Gibb, 2006). It comprises values which accept and embrace complexity through a relational orientation within a community of interests; it ensures that Māori maintain conceptual, methodological, and interpretive control over research; and it is a philosophy that guides the research and ensures Māori protocol will be followed during research processes (for example see Bishop, 1996; Henry & Pene, 2001; Pihama, Cram, & Walker, 2002; Smith, 1999). Therefore, alongside our call for more localised research on conceptions of servant and Indigenous leadership we suggest the need for different and more contextualised approaches to research to encourage investigation of the processes through which leadership relationships form and evolve (Bradbury & Lichtenstein, 2000; Uhl-Bien, 2006), which is of particular relevance to the study of leadership in an international and increasingly multi-cultural context.

**CONCLUSION**

Servant leadership and Indigenous Māori leadership each offer valid and exciting paradigms for leadership in all types of organisations. Both offer insight into leadership based on universal human values of respect, integrity and care for others. These values are not new. They are deeply embedded in ancient and Indigenous wisdoms that are [re]emerging in our management and organisation literature (Roca, 2007; Spiller, Erakovic, et al., 2011; Tsoukas & Cummings, 1997; Zhang et al., 2011). Not only do Indigenous approaches offer an important challenge to the narrow visions of universalism, in which Western views of leadership and management are located, but they contribute to the emerging conversation from Chinese, Latino and Islamic contexts (Faria et al., 2010; Jack et al.,
Surely, as we enter the second decade of our new millennium facing financial crises and environmental degradation founded on corporate greed these are values worth reclaiming and nurturing in our business leaders. This has implications, not only for how we expect our leaders to behave, but as scholars the type of research we support and what we teach in our business schools.

References


Tables

Table 1 – Values attributed to servant leadership

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Honesty</td>
<td>2. Empathy</td>
<td>2. Creating value for</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Integrity</td>
<td>3. Healing</td>
<td>the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Service</td>
<td>5. Persuasive</td>
<td>4. Empowering</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Pioneering</td>
<td>7. Show foresight</td>
<td>subordinates grow</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Appreciation of</td>
<td>8. Committed to stewardship</td>
<td>and succeed</td>
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<tr>
<td>others</td>
<td>9. Growth of people</td>
<td>6. Putting subordinates</td>
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Table 2 – Māori values at the heart of Te Ao Māori

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Meaning and underlying principle</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manakitanga</td>
<td>Relationship with people</td>
<td>The quality of caring, kindness, hospitality and showing respect for others. It reflects an expected standard of behavior, an ideal that one should aspire to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mana – power, value &amp; respect</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Whanaungatanga</td>
<td>Relationship amongst</td>
<td>The collective interdependence between and among</td>
</tr>
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people
• Whanau – familial relations

humankind. Reflecting a social relationality between all people.

Wairuatanga
Relationship with the gods
• Wairua – the spirit

Respecting the spiritual relationship to the ‘gods’ and the cosmos. Action must not damage the wairua/spirit of anything in the cosmos.

Kaitiakitanga
Relationship with the natural environment
• Tiaki – to guard
• Kaitiaki - a person, group or being that acts as a carer, guardian, protector.

The acknowledgement that humans are guardians of the environment. Caring for and protecting the natural environment, because we are intertwined.

<p>| Table 3 – A first glance connection between Māori leadership in practice and servant leadership in theory |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Māori values drawn                               | Manakitanga                      | Whanaungatanga                   | Wairuatanga                      | Kaitiakitanga                    |
| Servant leader values                            |                                  |                                  |                                  |                                  |
| People oriented                                  | ✔                                 | ✔                                 | ✔                                 | ✔                                 |
| Servant-hood/serves others first                  | ✔                                 | ✔                                 | ✔                                 | ✔                                 |
| Integrity                                        |                                   |                                   |                                   |                                   |</p>
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<tr>
<td>Honesty &amp; trust</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Show foresight</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stewardship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building community</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional healing/Empathy</td>
<td>✓</td>
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