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# Cross-Cultural Comparison of Servant Leadership in the United States and Latin America

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East Tennessee State University

Cross-Cultural Comparison of Servant Leadership in  
the United States and Latin America

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The Honors College – HID program

Undergraduate Thesis

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Background of the Issue**

In every organization, group, or community, there are always people that tend to excel more than others. Maybe they are born that way or perhaps develop a set of traits that help them to naturally lead others. It is normal that in a group, there is going to be an individual that wants to lead; however, leadership does not adhere to one strict definition. There are many styles of leadership around the world, and these styles differ due to the cultures and background of the countries from which they come. This research will focus on one main leadership style: the servant leader. Servant leadership is a particular style in which the leader always puts the rest of the group before him or herself. The servant leader is someone who is always willing to put others' needs first in order to develop their potential in the best way possible.

This research compares the practice and the acceptance of servant leadership between the United States of America and Latin America. To do this, a cross-cultural comparison was conducted between these two groups. The aim was to find the differences of the leadership styles in these two groups and to analyze the results. A survey was conducted with the goal of obtaining different feedback from individuals of the U.S. as well as from Latin America. The approach for this research starts by analyzing the results of the survey and dividing it into the two cultural groups. The results were tested using a one tailed t-test for the mean difference of independent samples. This research attempts to obtain information on how and why leadership styles differ between countries and what are the characteristics that people seek in leaders of these two groups. Ultimately, the findings are beneficial for many leaders around the U.S and Latin America by providing further knowledge of how they can improve their leadership skills with different people around the world; understanding that they can improve the connection with

an individual by knowing his or her cultural background; and recognizing that every person has a different personality.

## **Research Objective and Contribution**

In this study, the subject matter evaluated is the difference between the United States and Latin America concerning the practice and acceptance of servant leadership. As it was anticipated, the statistics drawn from the responses of the survey had a significant difference when testing servant leadership between the U.S. and Latin American samples. The results open more questions concerning why and what are the characteristics that cause these differences of practice and acceptance of this particular leadership between the two regions. It can be related to personality, cultural dimensions of each country, and even background and the way one was raised. By conducting this survey, I was able to compare work environments between these two groups drawing the conclusions with facts and not assumptions.

This research is focused on testing for potential differences between U.S and Latin American samples regarding the practice of servant leadership, opening new questions of how and why do these differences appear, and what a leader can do to improve the skills that can make him or her a more effective leader. Nowadays, if you want to be a successful leader, knowledge of your own country and culture is insufficient. Globalization is making the world so interconnected that leaders must be able to adapt to the many cultures and personalities around the world (Bersin, 2012).

My contribution with this study is the collection of data that measures servant leadership of the two groups and the explanation of these differences with secondary data to demonstrate why these differences occur in organizations in the U.S. and Latin America. Moreover, the results obtained provide knowledge and understanding for leaders across the U.S. and Latin

America to be more prepared when dealing with multicultural organizations and to learn new techniques and skills that can help them to be more effective leaders. Additionally, the results can help leaders across the U.S. and especially Latin America by encouraging new techniques that include servant leadership qualities. By acquiring knowledge of what followers look for in leaders nowadays, leaders are able to better understand them, thereby creating a better connection with each follower and developing a more effective work environment and an interconnected team.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Leadership Styles Among Cultures:**

Many studies show how globalization is not a topic of the future. It is happening now, and it is making an effect on different societies causing cultures around the world to develop in a more interconnected way. But with these cultures growing together, new challenges emerge in many organizations (Cardone, Cote, Gustafson, Kearney, & Worthy, 2010). To be able to succeed in the business world, leaders must realize that they are going to work and socialize with people from different cultures. Therefore, leaders have to start thinking globally along with learning to adapt and use the necessary skills to create an efficient team that can help to achieve the goals of a specific organization.

Around the world, there are a multitude of different cultures, and to be able to understand them, you have to think like them. It is important for leaders to realize and be aware that their comments and actions can possibly affect the people who follow them due to cultural differences. According to a cross-cultural examination of ethical leadership, leaders sometimes do not realize that their actions can affect other people's feelings and cause resentment among their subordinates. It is of extreme importance to know your employees in order to avoid cultural

clashes of this type because the code of ethics of an individual can vary from one culture to the next (Resick, Hanges, Dickson, & Mitchelson, 2006). There are many studies that emphasize the cultural differences among many different societies and how leaders, and people in general, develop their different personality traits according to their cultural background (Chhokar, Brodbeck, & House, 2007).

In the business world, a leader has to be prepared and willing to go anywhere. Therefore, it is essential for a leader to learn that people in other countries may react differently than in his or her respective country. Furthermore, we must understand that it is harder to move to another place and assume one will be a good leader. Instead, when expanding a business or company in another country, we may want to consider teaching a certain style of leadership to employees in this country in order to gauge if a natural leader can emerge from there. In one article of Forbes magazine, Bersin (2012) uses the term ‘global localization.’ He states: “It is not as easy as it sounds, but in leadership, as in all other business processes, it is important to think about what we can change and what must stay the same” (p. 1). Thus, it is critical, especially in the business world, to find a balance between asserting one’s own culture and adapting to the culture of the target country.

### **Servant Leadership Rising Around the World:**

When asking about which leadership style is better, there is not a correct answer. Leaders have different methods, views, and visions of how they want to succeed personally and what they can do to make their group succeed. The servant leadership style has been rising in popularity in the past years due to the effects and results that it generates in many communities and organizations (Spears, 2005). Creating a more involved, loyal, and diverse work environment are advantages that servant leadership gives to a community and organizations.



Servant leadership is growing exponentially around the world, thus generating more interest for leaders around the world. Specifically in Latin American, leaders have been trying to employ this type of leadership in their respective groups (Irving & McIntosh, 2010).

Many other studies have indicated how servant leadership, nowadays, is applied more frequently due to how it connects and creates special relationships among people, and consequently, creates a more honest and trusting relationship among people across communities (Mittal & Dorfman, 2012). Servant leaders connect on a deeper level with their followers than other leaders. This is why cultural knowledge arises as an extremely important aspect or component in a leader. This knowledge is related to the amount of servant leadership practiced around different countries because countries that have been exposed to servant leadership tend to have people in the workplace who realize the significance of cultural differences (Hannay, 2009).

Furthermore, with the increase of globalization, people have started to realize that servant leadership is a style that does not clash with any specific culture; the main goal is to develop and strengthen the whole group at the same time with less focus on immediate results and more emphasis on helping each other to create a better environment (Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010). Therefore, servant leaders' philosophy is being accepted and promoted around the world. The authors of the book *Servant-Leadership Across Cultures* describes servant leadership as "the world's most powerful leadership philosophy" (Trompenaars & Voerman, 2009, p. 1). That is why servant leadership philosophy can be the future of many companies looking to have deeper roots with stronger branches.

### **Servant Leadership and Its Dimensions:**

The founder of modern servant leadership is Robert K. Greenleaf. In his book *Servant Leadership: A Journey Into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, Greenleaf (1997) explains how being a servant and being a leader can create a different style of leadership. Greenleaf (1977) emphasizes that the servant person, being a leader or a follower, is always wanting to learn, listen, and put in practice the knowledge they gain. In leadership positions, it is certainly difficult to make everyone happy. However, when there is too much power in a position, sometimes leaders forget that they are leaders and become a more authoritarian figure. Servant leaders advocate the unconditional support to their followers in order to develop a more trusting relationship.

Many studies have developed measures to assess servant leadership. However, there are some inconsistent sets of dimensions due to the increase of research on servant leadership (Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008). The present study is based on the dimensions created by Robert Liden, et al. (2008). The seven dimensions are: a) emotional healing, b) creating value for the community, c) conceptual skills, d) empowering, e) helping subordinates grow and succeed, f) putting subordinates first, and g) behaving ethically (Liden, et al. 2008). These dimensions work together to create a better understanding of the servant leader. Moreover, this set of dimensions proves to be reliable as it is employed by many studies and research projects, showing that it is an empirical method of assessing servant leadership. We used Liden's measure due to the significance of this research. In another study that tests servant leadership, the authors' state: "None of these dimensions alone, or even subsets dimensions, adequately capture the complexity of global servant leadership" (Liden, Wayne, Meuser, Hu, Wu, & Liao, 2015). That is why, when observing and analyzing servant leadership, it is better to look at the combination

of all of its dimensions which create a leader that possesses the necessary skills to help his or her followers.

Studies suggest how by being a servant leader, followers fall into the vision of helping, thereby creating more effort on helping other subordinates and creating connections with each subordinate within the organization (Hunter, Neubert, Perry, Witt, Penney, & Weinberger, 2013). The literature of servant leadership is inconsistent due to the cultural differences that appear in different regions of the world. However, when defining the philosophy of a servant leader, the literature is clear and concise in its acknowledgement of servant leadership as a style that is garnering more attention due to the involvement and loyalty that creates within a society or organization.

### **Improving Leadership Skills Across Cultures:**

Aside from culture and different leadership styles, in order to be a good leader one must practice and learn. Some studies explain how leaders improve their skills by observing and listening to leaders from other companies. By using questionnaires, one can learn to listen to their employees and maybe even create a better relationship increasing the work satisfaction and improving the work environment (Cook, 2009).

In the book, *Outliers: The Story of Success*, Malcolm Gladwell (2008) tells us many stories of how people around the world react differently. In one particular story, he explains how Korean airlines experienced frequent plane crashes. Taking into account the weather and pilot fatigue, some of the crashes could be attributed to a lack of direct communication among Korean members of the crew. A culture rooted in formality, a member of lesser authority would be hesitant to correct his superior, which in the case of Korean airlines, led to delayed action and subsequent crashes. In another instance, Gladwell demonstrates how cultural differences lead to

serious miscommunication. A Colombian pilot was held in the air of New York City for one hour with short fuel and instead of challenging the air traffic control officer's command, the plane crashed. The author argues that no American pilot would put up with that situation, and he attributes the crash to the culture of the Colombian pilot to not challenge authority (Gladwell, 2008). It is obvious that by understanding and immersing one's self with cultures around the world, one can develop leadership techniques and skills that in various work environments can make a difference.

There is also evidence from some big companies around the world that demonstrate how they function based on teamwork. There are several big companies around the world where managers and bosses are no longer employed. In this situation, employees are motivated to do their job because they know what they are doing and they don't have to respond to anybody. Eventually leaders arise, and it turns out that in these companies, everybody is helping each other to get the job done. They work based on how much they can do to make their work better. It is not a matter of how much time you work but how well you use the time to get the job done (Blakeman, 2014).

### **Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Related with Leadership:**

In this study, I evaluate the differences between the two groups studied in regards to their leadership styles. There are many factors that can influence the development of a particular leadership style. Leaders must be able to adapt to the different personalities and cultural differences that a work environment can present. Developing a personality that in the future is going to be exposed to the real world is related on how you were raised and many cultural traits depending on where you are from (Nofle & Shaver, 2006). It is important for leaders to know

this so that they may connect in a more meaningful way with every member of their group, no matter how different their personalities are.

As personality is factor in the development of leadership styles, there are other dimensions that also have a significant impact on how a leader practices a particular leadership style. These are Hofstede's cultural dimensions: power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, and long-term orientation. These cultural dimensions can affect the work place of a company because it can cause a clash between individuals that do not think the same way. The recent GLOBE studies (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004) provide data placing Latin America with the highest power distance score. According to Hofstede, communities with high power distance scores are more likely to suffer from inequality and less likely to find servant leadership traces and values (Hofstede, 1984). These cultural dimensions work in a similar way as the personality traits. There have been scenarios in which marketers and companies must adapt their way of working due to the different values and goals they have and due to how one country can differ from another (Soares, Farhangmehr, & Shoham, 2007).

With the increase of globalization and modernization, many of these dimensions are starting to be adapted in a better way. For example, collectivistic countries are starting to develop more individualistic traits mainly because they have to find opportunities in another places. Globalization is making business narrower in regards to leadership styles, and this is helping people to adapt into different systems in an easier and more effective way (Hamamura, 2011).

Equally important to this study is the Maslow's hierarchy of needs, a motivational psychology theory that explains the needs of human beings (Maslow, 1943). A five-stage model was created dividing the different needs of humans. (*See Figure 1*). People are motivated by certain needs, but in order to achieve those needs, one must fulfill the set of needs of an earlier

stage (McLeod, 2016). Humans' most basic need is physical survival, and this is the first thing that motivates human behavior. Once this level is fulfilled, one proceeds to the next. The most important needs are at the bottom of the five-stage model, and once those needs are achieved, more importance is placed on the other stages of needs. In a work environment, if the basic needs are not fulfilled, higher level needs cannot be expected to be met. Moreover, in third world countries fulfilling these needs can be more of a challenge. Leaders in these countries may not achieve their own basic needs of security and safety, thus making it more difficult to help others if they don't even have their basic needs fulfilled. This is why when analyzing the Hofstede's cultural dimensions of a particular country, one must understand that these scores are different due to the different cultures these countries represent. Additionally, one must take into account that the Maslow hierarchy of needs can have an impact on these dimensions due to having differences in the basic needs obtained by the majority of people in the country.

### **Improving Cultural Awareness and Avoiding Cultural Clashes:**

Globalization is connecting the world in such a powerful way that it affects every business. Leaders have to communicate and create their views and systems with their followers in order to have a team working towards the same vision. There are studies that show how some important dimensions of servant leadership can have different values across cultures (Resick, et al. 2006). It is crucial that the leader and the followers are on the same page. Thus, it can be a challenge when working with people from different cultures, which underscores the importance of having knowledge of employees' culture and background in order to avoid cultural problems.

Studies have shown how imperative it is to understand some concepts of culture to be able to succeed as a global leader. Concepts such as awareness for understanding how each individual is going to react, avoiding stereotypes, and increasing self-assurance are important

factors when dealing with people of different cultures (Chuang, 2013). Globalization is accelerating the pace of business. Leaders nowadays must view this not as an obstacle but as an opportunity to develop their company and send it to the next level.

Leaderships varies across cultures and the way people see leaders can vary according to the cultural background of each person. In their book *Servant-Leadership Across Cultures*, Trompenaars and Voerman (2009) emphasize cultural clashes within an organization, and how it is easier to have a misunderstanding between people from different cultures because they have been raised with different values. They state: “Value judgments are almost automatic when dealing with culture differences” (p. 19). Here is the time when a successful servant leader arises. It is understood that servant leaders have a deeper connection with their followers and know the cultural values of each of them. Naturally leaders themselves have their own personal beliefs which is why there must be an effort to understand that every person has the right to a different viewpoint. However, a solution ought to be made to create a more harmonious environment and to avoid resentments within a group, organization, or community.

### **Leadership Styles and Social Issues in Latin America:**

All the literature and data available about cultural dimensions and leadership styles is crucial to understanding the answers of the survey that was conducted. But it is also crucial to consider the background of the two groups studied, especially Latin America. It must be understood that Latin America has suffered from corruption and violence for many years, creating uncertainty among Latin American people. In the book *Populism in Latin America*, Conniff (2012) explains that there are leaders in Latin America that show the use of power as a way of leading. Numerous leaders of this region have left a legacy of corruption and manipulation.

Many studies have shown that in South America people tend to be more submissive, and the extreme differences in social classes in Latin America greatly affect employees' attitudes thereby creating a troublesome work environment (Jones, 2005). With this being said, servant leadership is hardly found in many places of the region, and the reasons why are starting to become clear. Uncertainty, fear, lack of confidence, violence, corruption, and leaders taking advantage of people are the reasons as to why servant leadership is uncommon. However, a change to the status quo is necessary to help Latin American people look ahead and continue development.

According to McIntosh and Irving (2008), there has been an increase of interest in servant leadership in Latin America. They state, "It is paradoxical that Latin America scored the highest among nine regions of the world on institutional collectivistic values but the lowest of the nine on institutional collectivistic practices" (p. 42). The reason for this difference can relate to the extreme differences in social classes. While Latin American culture is family oriented and warm, the work environment is much different, characterized by the uncertainty that past Latin America leaders have created with corruption and abuse of power. Other studies emphasize the lack of knowledge of Latin American leaders concerning the servant leadership context and structure. Even though servant leadership is appealing to many people in Latin America, there seem to be many barriers that affect the practice of servant leadership in this region (Irving & McIntosh, 2010).



## Research Hypothesis

**Ho:** There is no difference in the practice of servant leadership between U.S. and Latin America samples.

**Ha:** There is a difference in the practice of servant leadership between U.S. and Latin America samples, such that scores for the U.S. sample will be significantly greater than those from the Latin American sample

**Ho:**  $\beta^1 = \beta^2$

**Ha:**  $\beta^1 > \beta^2$

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### Research Design

This research was conducted with the objective of making a comparison of the practice of servant leadership between the U.S. and Latin America. A survey was constructed to examine the type of leadership used in the U.S. as well as in Latin America. The survey tested the 7 dimensions that identify servant leadership. The 7 dimensions are a) emotional healing, b) creating value for the community, c) conceptual skills, d) empowering, e) helping subordinates grow and succeed, f) putting subordinates first, and g) behaving ethically. The seven dimensions tested for servant leadership were created by Liden et al. (2008). Liden and colleagues created a reliable set of dimensions providing validated and consistent measures that test servant leadership. The statistical test that was used in this study is a one tail *t*-test for the mean difference of independent samples.

The survey was conducted the same way for the two groups, with the difference that for the Latin American sample the survey was translated to Spanish with the approval of the IRB.

The answers were separated in order to compare the two groups studied which are: Latin American people and North American people. The survey was given to a sample of 304 individuals of Latin America and a sample of 277 individuals of the U.S. The answers were withdrawn and inserted in the SPSS system to run the statistical tests needed getting an average of the answer that were leveled from 1 to 7, 1 being strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 slightly disagree, 4 neither agree nor disagree, 5 slightly agree, 6 agree, and 7 strongly agree. The survey conducted was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of East Tennessee State University (c0616.2e-ETSU) to ensure the rights and welfare of human subjects involved in research under their authority. In Latin America, the survey was translated and was conducted via the NETQUEST platform. Their mission is to obtain reliable data via satisfied individuals, thanks to a unique participation incentive system that enables them to obtain plentiful and highly representative samples of Latin American population, thereby giving reliable and accurate data. The Latin American sample had 304 responses, with 51.97% of the participants being male and 48.03% female, and an average age of 26.92 ( $SD = 6.365$ ). On the other hand, the U.S. sample had 277 responses, with 60.7% of the participants being male and 39.3% being female, and average age of 23.76 ( $SD = 5.794$ ).

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

### **Results**

A survey was conducted to measure servant leadership in the U.S. and Latin America. With the increase in importance of leadership within business and companies, leadership styles and the need of leaders have raised more questions on how we can become or create better leaders. The survey was developed in order to evaluate different characteristics and traits between the two groups, and more importantly, to evaluate the differences on the seven

dimensions of servant leadership. The results that we obtained were statistically significant and explained many of the assumptions that were made in the beginning. In the group statistics, the Latin American sample had a mean score of 4.486 ( $SD = 1.19632$ ), while the U.S. sample had a mean score of 4.7621 ( $SD = 1.22491$ ). From the seven dimensions that we studied for servant leadership, three dimensions were significant with a 99% confidence level, three dimensions were significant with 90% confidence level, and there was not a significant difference in one of the dimensions. See *Table 1* and *Table 2* for a summary of the study results, *Table 3* to see the statistics that show significant differences in each dimension ( $p$ -value), *Table 4* (Latin America) and *Table 5* (USA) to see each individual question results, and *Table 6* to see the items used in the survey.

### **Dimensions With 99% Confidence Level**

Emotional healing, conceptual skills, and behaving ethically are the three dimensions with a  $p$ -value lower than 0.01, meaning they have a 99% confidence level. Emotional healing is the act of showing and having sensitivity to others personal problems and concerns (Liden, et al., 2008). Emotional healing can come in different forms. Optimism, hope and resilience are characteristics of servant leaders. Being an optimistic leader is not an easy task as you must be prepared for adversity, consequences, and many disputes that can happen in a team or organization (Humphrey, 2013). Resilience is the ability to remain strong and keep everything together in times of stress and adversity. Resilience is a crucial characteristic for a servant leader because it creates trust and hope within the followers to see their leader bounce back from different scenarios (Humphrey, 2013). Giving support to your followers in a time of adversity and providing emotional support, as well as the ability to help them recover from any traumatic

event is something servant leaders do to gain the trust of their followers (Barbuto & Hayden, 2011).

For the emotional healing dimension, the people of the U.S. sample had a mean score of 4.9152 ( $SD = 1.59214$ ), and the Latin America sample had a mean score of 4.4276 ( $SD = 1.39309$ ). There was a significant difference in this dimension with a  $p$ -value of 0.000. A significant difference is seen in some specific questions like: “My manager takes time to talk to me on a personal level” And “My manager cares about my personal well-being”. The Latin America sample received a mean score of 4.46 ( $SD = 1.710$ ) and 4.48 ( $SD = 1.611$ ) respectively, in contrast with the U.S sample that received 5.17 ( $SD = 1.730$ ) and 5.33 ( $SD = 1.628$ ) respectively. One can observe how Americans believe that their bosses or leaders are more involved or concerned with their lives and that they care on an emotional level, being more sensitive to many personal problems. On the other hand, Latin Americans believe that this happens less. Their score is not low, but when practicing servant leadership, emotional healing is one important dimension that is not being used as it should if one wants to be a servant leader. When talking about warmth and collectivism, Latin America has always had this culture of family first and a collectivist culture that defines them, which is in contrast with the very individualistic country that is the U.S. But with this result, we can see that in the context of a work environment, it is completely different. The U.S. sample scored a higher mean score on emotional healing than the Latin America sample.

Servant leaders are leaders that sympathize with their employees and can relate to their problems making them feel comfortable and secure. Not also do they sympathize with their employees, but servant leaders also understand their background and the possibilities of mental problems and trauma employees can experience. Many studies explain how emotional healing is

one skill that can be extremely powerful because it provide a connection between people that is difficult to break (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Furthermore, when considering why Latin America has this problem of not being able to connect to the leaders, with respect to this dimension of emotional healing, one must consider the social differences that exist, and they are extreme. There is so much difficulty in overcoming situations in third world countries that one is not accustomed to connecting with people in the work environment because people believe that if they want to succeed, they have to essentially “turn off” their feelings and move forward. This behavior can be explained by the Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Maslow (1943) explains how people are motivated to achieve their respective needs, and some needs are required to be fulfilled in order to be motivated to achieve new needs. We cannot expect leaders of Latin America to be servant leaders if they do not have their basic needs fulfilled. Work conditions in Latin America vary due to extreme social inequality, thus suggesting why we see low emotional connection between bosses and subordinates. In order to help others, this being the main characteristic of a servant leader, one needs to feel that at least he has his own basic needs fulfilled, and this fulfillment may not happen in many companies, organizations, and communities of Latin America. This suggests a factor as to why servant leadership, more specifically, emotional healing, is not prominent in Latin America. The region must recognize that it is crucial to have a leader that understands and helps his employees overcome different situations in order to build relationships based on trust.

Conceptual skills was the second dimension with a p-value lower than 0.01. Conceptual skills refers to having the knowledge of the organization or company and what is the work that needs to be done so that leaders can be effective in helping their followers (Liden, et al.2008). The U.S sample had a mean score of 5.2897 ( $SD = 1.26055$ ), and the Latin America sample had

a mean score of 4.9778 ( $SD = 1.24069$ ), with a p-value of 0.003 of significant difference between the two groups that were surveyed.

Many studies suggest that strong leaders need awareness. Successful servant leaders are trying to connect with their people all the time (Chuang, 2013). As stated before, corruption in Latin America creates uncertainty and fear among people, thus giving them a feeling that they cannot trust anyone. This may be one of the reasons why conceptual skills had a lower score in the Latin American sample. Given the many social differences in Latin America, there is a status quo that if you want to be successful, you have to know people. Skills and dedication to work does not matter. That is why followers in Latin America have a feeling of uncertainty, a feeling that it may never be good enough.

We can see that there is a significant difference in the answers of some specific questions that test conceptual skills. For example, in the question “My manager is able to effectively think through complex problems”, Latin America sample had a mean score of 4.88 ( $SD = 1.485$ ) and the U.S. sample had a mean score of 5.34 ( $SD = 1.479$ ). The maximum score was 7. Furthermore, for the questions “My manager has a thorough understanding of our organization and its goals”, and “My manager can solve work problems with new or creative ideas”, the Latin America sample had a mean score of 5.20 ( $SD = 1.501$ ) and 4.93 ( $SD = 1.481$ ) respectively and the U.S sample had mean score of 5.73 ( $SD = 1.347$ ) and 5.27 ( $SD = 1.484$ ) respectively. It is evident that there is a significant difference between the two groups tested. By looking at the specific questions described, one can see that in Latin America, people do not have complete trust in their leader. It does not mean that in the U.S they have a maximum score of 7, but there is a significance difference in the score that these two groups had. These specific questions are basically testing the conceptual skills people think their leaders have. It is extremely important

for leaders to create self-assurance, because it helps to create and build more confidence for their followers or employees (Weiss, 2004). It is very important for leaders to always be one step ahead of everyone else and be excited if they have new challenges for their organization (Chuang, 2013). If their employees see that their leaders are in control of everything and they have knowledge of what is going on, it gives them the confidence to trust their leaders.

Behaving ethically was the last dimension found in the results with a  $p$ -value lower than 0.01. Behaving ethically is the act of interacting openly, in a fair way to everybody in the group or organization and always being honest (Liden, et al. 2008). The U.S sample had a mean score of 5.2175 ( $SD = 1.52198$ ), while the Latin America sample had a score of 4.7681 ( $SD = 1.33161$ ). So, with a  $p$ -value of 0.00, there is significant evidence of the difference in this dimension between the two groups studied.

To be able to create effective leadership, one must behave ethically. Every good leader must have good moral foundations to be able to transmit this behavior to their followers or employees. There are four aspects of ethical leadership that are character/integrity, altruism, collective motivation, and encouragement (Resick et al., 2006). These dimensions have been tested in many different cultures to assure that they mean the same to every country. It has been found that these four dimensions are crucial and important to the practice of effective leadership. However, one can find many differences across different cultures and how they practice or support each different dimension. These results are crucial to understanding how to approach ethics across all cultures.

As we can see in the results of the survey, there is a significance difference in the dimension of behaving ethically between the two groups studied. Culture across these two groups are different, and it explains how there can be difference in a topic that is globally

recognized as essential in every organization. Behaving ethically has been an issue that affects every single country in Latin America. According to Arruda (1997), there are low standards when talking about ethics in this region, and despite the poverty, corrupts leaders and dictators across countries have created a moral problem that affects not only the people but the well-being of the country. The uncertainty within the people of Latin America is an issue that every country faces because they have been dealing with corruption and violence for many years. According to Hofstede (1984), uncertainty avoidance is explained as members of a culture feeling threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and the extent to which a society tolerates the uncertainty of what is going to happen in the future. The U.S has a low uncertainty avoidance index, while Latin American countries show a high uncertainty avoidance index (Hofstede, 2016). Thus, this exemplifies how in Latin American societies, people accept more uncertainty and continue following rules and laws that are usually being broken by people in higher positions. In societies where corruption is prominent, important political leaders tend to justify any abuse of power by finding “legal loopholes that redeem or justify it”, thus creating uncertainty within societies in Latin America due to the amount of unethical behavior seen in these countries (Hofstede, 2016).

Behaving ethically in Latin America is an issue and we can see that from the results that we obtained in the survey. In specific questions, such as “My manager holds high ethical standards” and “My manager would not compromise ethical principles in order to achieve success”, the Latin America sample had a mean score of 4.90 ( $SD = 1.590$ ) and 4.43 ( $SD = 1.640$ ) respectively, while the U.S. sample had a mean score of 5.32 ( $SD = 1.688$ ) and 5.23 ( $SD = 1.673$ ) respectively. The difference in scores are significantly different. With these results, one can understand the ethical behavior between the two groups and how Latin American leaders don't have the support of their followers or employees when talking about ethics. When



practicing servant leadership, behaving ethically is such an important factor because one must show and demonstrate to followers of how to succeed without compromising values as a person. When a leader behaves ethically, it also gives the leader transparency, and that is a quality that makes an effect on the followers. Sharing information with the followers, as well as being open to receiving feedback from them, allows the leader to gain the trust of their followers and the opportunity to be direct with the specific decisions that must be made (Humphrey, 2013). The U.S. sample had a high score on behaving ethically, showing how they behave more ethically in general. Ethics has been a problem in Latin America, and the results showed that it continues to be. It also reveals one of the various reasons why servant leaders and servant leadership is more common in the U.S. than in the Latin American region.

#### **Dimensions With 90% Confidence Level**

The next three dimensions of servant leadership are: Helping subordinates grow and succeed, putting subordinates first, and empowering. All these dimensions had a  $p$ -value lower than 0.1, creating a confidence level of 90%. It may not be as strong as the other dimensions, but it still reveals some significant difference between the two groups studied. Helping subordinates grow and succeed had a  $p$ -value of 0.056. Helping subordinates grow and succeed is when the leader demonstrates real concern for other people's career growth and for providing them mentoring and support in the process of developing and improving their career. The U.S sample had a mean score of 4.7771 ( $SD = 1.58448$ ), while the Latin American sample had a mean score of 4.5354 ( $SD = 1.45766$ ).

It is not a surprise that helping employees to succeed can make the business develop and grow. Investing in the development of employees can result in a better output of quality in the organization. By giving them the tools and knowledge to improve, a better work environment

can be created. By becoming a mentor to employees, a leader can help develop their career, as well as create greater trust. There is a status quo in Latin America that leaders are going to do whatever they can to acquire more power, and that they do not care about the rest as long as they get what they want (Irving & McIntosh, 2010). Clear examples of Latin American political leaders such as Hugo Chavez and Fidel Castro demonstrate that they did whatever they could to remain in power. Being a mentor is like being a leader, one must prepare subordinates or followers for the challenges they are going to face in their lives. The U.S. leaders show more mentoring skills within the organization and understand why it is so important to form and guide the young employees to develop their potential in a more structured way. The importance of mentoring is growing exponentially in the U.S. and many studies and programs are seen that promote mentoring more and more every year, creating more prepared leaders for the future.

Putting subordinates first got a p-value of 0.083. Putting subordinates first consists of leaders doing whatever is necessary to help and guide their subordinates without concern of having to stop their own activities in the moment (Liden et al., 2008). Servant leaders are leaders that do this all the time and have no hesitation when assisting their followers to be able to help them in whatever they need. The U.S. sample had a mean score of 3.9982 ( $SD = 1.54462$ ), while the Latin American sample had a mean score of 3.7878 ( $SD = 1.36138$ ).

Servant leaders put as their priorities the needs of their subordinates. Many studies suggest that the low practice of servant leadership in Latin America comes from the Hofstede five cultural dimensions. To be more specific, Latin America has a high score in power distance, which is linked with a low use and practice of servant leadership (Irving & McIntosh, 2010). Power distance is the extent to which the less powerful members of societies and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally (Hofstede, 1984). Latin

America's high score reveals that societies accept the inequality of power. Furthermore, the real problem of societies with a high power distance score, meaning they accept inequality, is that inequality is not only accepted by the followers but the leaders as well (Hofstede, 2016). There is no doubt that Latin America is a region that suffers severely from inequality and has been haunted by corruption and social power for many years. Therefore, it is not surprising to see low results when talking about putting subordinates first in Latin America.

Empowering is the last dimension with a significant difference in the study. Having a *p*-value of 0.075 it gives a 90% confidence level. The U.S sample had a mean score of 4.8150 (*SD* = 1.44504), while the Latin America sample had a mean score of 4.6135 (*SD* = 1.27955).

Empowering is motivating and encouraging the followers or employees to complete tasks and facilitating them in identifying the problems and tasks within an organization (Liden et al., 2008). Empowering is a key factor for servant leaders because servant leaders focus on helping others. By helping, it doesn't mean doing the work but helping them to develop their skills to be able to complete the tasks that are assigned to each one. According to the Hofstede (2016), the U.S scores low in power distance. Low power distance is linked to greater equality and greater empowerment within the society.

Empowering is essential for leaders to practice because it gives the opportunity for the followers to oversee important decisions in the company creating bigger responsibilities for them. Servant leaders practice empowering because it helps their followers to develop their skills. As seen in the results of the survey, empowering in a work environment in the U.S. is more common than in Latin America and that is associated with the practice of servant leadership in this region. Latin America is growing but the presence of traits of servant leaderships are not as common and prevalent as they should be. There is no doubt that this is

changing, but by understanding how these dimensions' work and how they are influenced by cultural differences, we can open more questions for further research of the practice of servant leadership in a region that is in need of servant leaders.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion, Limitations, and Recommendations**

### **Conclusion**

This study demonstrates the differences between the U.S. and Latin America regarding the practice of servant leadership. Furthermore, it gives specific detail of the differences within each dimension that tested servant leadership. While this leadership style is growing around the world, more literature is needed, especially in the Latin American region. This provides opportunities for future research to produce more substantial data. Servant leadership is a style that is getting more attention due to the benefits that it provides in a community or organization. Having the knowledge of cultural differences and how cultural dimensions affect the personality and behavior of people in this context, it is crucial in understanding the differences of leadership styles presented in the two groups studied.

While in the U.S. there is greater exposure to servant leadership, in Latin America, such exposure is clearly less. The reasons why can be related to cultural issues and current leadership styles. After analyzing the cultural dimensions of the U.S. and Latin America, we found differences in some Hofstede's cultural dimensions, such as power distance, and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 2016). The high score in power distance explains the inequality in Latin America and the extent to which Latin American society accepts the power being held by a few people. This can be associated with the high score of uncertainty avoidance in the Latin American community and the extent to which the Latin American people accept the uncertainty of many issues, such as economic, social and political ones. In other words, the authoritarian

leadership style in Latin America has led to problems such as corruption, inequality, and violence in these societies. This then naturally creates uncertainty for the Latin American community concerning the future of their countries and giving them no other option than to accept the inequality of power. But one must ask: How can a society fight inequality and avoid such great uncertainty if many of the people cannot even obtain the basic needs suggested by the Maslow's hierarchy of needs? How can someone be a servant leader in a work environment where the satisfaction of the basic needs is scant? After analyzing the results, I assert that as long as the Latin American community does not improve social and power inequality issues, servant leadership cannot be viable or prominent in this region due to the characteristics required of this leadership style. Furthermore, the differences of the amount of practice of servant leadership between the two groups studied are identified in mainly cultural issues. The U.S. being a more assertive culture in general explains how people from the U.S., which has a low uncertainty avoidance index score, do not approve of high uncertainty in the future nor inequality of power, thereby giving them more room to grow as a whole community and having a more prominent use of servant leadership.

This research gives many suggestions as to why servant leadership practice in Latin America is not as prominent as the U.S. Hopefully, this research will encourage future researchers to keep developing more literature on servant leadership in the U.S. and Latin America. The Latin American region is more accustomed to an authoritarian leadership style, yet the increase of servant leadership in this area may be the answer to bringing change and hope for this multicultural community.

## **Recommendations**

The amount of literature concerning servant leadership in a Latin American context is scarce, which is why with this paper, we want to encourage researchers to explore to a greater extent the practice of servant leadership in this region. Also, we would like to encourage the education system to teach and promote different styles of leadership, including servant leadership. We are not claiming that servant leadership is the best style of leadership, but we encourage servant leadership to be included in projects with the goal of developing more literature as well as more knowledge on the people of Latin America.

In their article, Irving and McIntosh (2010) recommend further research of servant leadership in the Latin American context to in order to retest servant leadership instruments used outside Latin America to determine if they are reliable when translated into Spanish. We conducted the survey using the measure created by Liden et al. (2008). We translated the instruments tested, and it was reviewed by the Institutional Review board (IRB) of ETSU (c0616.2e-ETSU). This being said, we need more research focusing on the Latin American region to be able to validate the results and create more substantial data and more reliable answers. This would undoubtedly provide a better understanding of servant leadership, and how different leadership styles can have a great impact in the Latin American region, as well as in the U.S.

## **Limitations**

The success of this research was based mainly on the survey conducted. We assume that the answers of the survey are of good quality. This means that the participants took the time to complete it in a responsible way. To conduct the survey, we used a trustful platform that targeted students willing to be part of research projects that can give society important information. One

important limitation in this paper was the low amount of literature found on servant leadership in Latin America. According to Irving and McIntosh (2010), there is an increase of literature on servant leadership in the U.S., but it is still very low in Latin America.

Finally, the last limitation found was the length of the survey and the 28-item length that tested servant leadership. In their article, Liden et al. (2008) states: “The large numbers of items not only takes time that could otherwise be used for measuring additional variables, but also may introduce fatigue or boredom among respondents, which may negatively influence the quality of the responses obtained” (p. 255). Even though we targeted students willing to be part of this research, we cannot be 100% sure that the responses of the participants were not influenced by fatigue or boredom.

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**Table 1**

Group Statistics					
	Sample	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Servant Leadership	Latin America	304	4.486	1.19632	0.06861
	U.S	277	4.7621	1.22491	0.0736

Independent Samples Test					
		Lavene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means	
		F	Sig.	t	df
Servant Leadership	Equal variances assumed	0.491	0.484	-2.747	579
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.744	571.212

Independent Samples Test					
		t-test for Equality of Means			
		sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	
Servant Leadership	Equal variances assumed	0.006	-0.2761	0.10051	
	Equal variances not assumed	0.006	-0.2761	0.10062	

Independent Samples Test					
		t-test for Equality of means 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
		lower	upper		
Servant Leadership	Equal variances assumed	-0.47351	-0.07869		
	Equal variances not assumed	-0.47373	-0.07847		

**Table 2**

## T-TEST

## Group Statistics

	Sample	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
EmotionalHealing	Latin America	304	4.4276	1.39309	0.07990
	U.S.	277	4.9152	1.59214	0.09566
CreatingValuefortheCommunity	Latin America	304	4.2919	1.44583	0.08292
	U.S.	277	4.3222	1.67873	0.10087
ConceptualSkills	Latin America	304	4.9778	1.24069	0.07116
	U.S.	277	5.2897	1.26055	0.07574
Empowering	Latin America	304	4.6135	1.27955	0.07339
	U.S.	277	4.8150	1.44504	0.08682
HelpingSubordinatesGrow andSucceed	Latin America	304	4.5354	1.45766	0.08360
	U.S.	277	4.7771	1.58448	0.09520
PuttingSubordinatesFirst	Latin America	304	3.7878	1.36138	0.07808
	U.S.	277	3.9982	1.54462	0.09281
BehavingEthically	Latin America	304	4.7681	1.33161	0.07637
	U.S.	277	5.2175	1.52198	0.09145

**Table 3**

## Independent Samples test

		df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference
EmotionalHealing	Equal variances assumed	579	0.000	-0.48753
	Equal variances not assumed	551.098	0.000	-0.48753
CreatingValuefortheCommunity	Equal variances assumed	579	0.816	-0.03026
	Equal variances not assumed	547.396	0.817	-0.03026
ConceptualSkills	Equal variances assumed	579	0.003	-0.31192
	Equal variances not assumed	572.195	0.003	-0.31192
Empowering	Equal variances assumed	579	0.075	-0.20150
	Equal variances not assumed	553.773	0.077	-0.20150
HelpingSubordinatesGrowandSucceed	Equal variances assumed	579	0.056	-0.24171
	Equal variances not assumed	561.599	0.057	-0.24171
PuttingSubordinatesFirst	Equal variances assumed	579	0.082	-0.21037
	Equal variances not assumed	552.741	0.083	-0.21037
BehavingEthically	Equal variances assumed	579	0.000	-0.44942
	Equal variances not assumed	551.081	0.000	-0.44942

Sample = Latin America

**Table 4**

Descriptive Statistics <sup>a</sup>					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
ServLead1	304	1	7	4.59	1.725
ServLead2	304	1	7	4.48	1.611
ServLead3	304	1	7	4.46	1.710
ServLead4	304	1	7	4.18	1.609
ServLead5	304	1	7	4.34	1.580
ServLead6	304	1	7	4.41	1.606
ServLead7	304	1	7	4.21	1.629
ServLead8	304	1	7	4.21	1.681
ServLead9	304	1	7	4.90	1.492
ServLead10	304	1	7	4.88	1.485
ServLead11	304	1	7	5.20	1.501
ServLead12	304	1	7	4.93	1.481
ServLead13	304	1	7	4.84	1.488
ServLead14	304	1	7	4.69	1.587
ServLead15	304	1	7	4.91	1.459
ServLead16	304	1	7	4.02	1.771
ServLead17	304	1	7	4.32	1.665
ServLead18	304	1	7	4.54	1.674
ServLead19	304	1	7	4.85	1.562
ServLead20	304	1	7	4.44	1.703
ServLead21	304	1	7	3.53	1.588
ServLead22	304	1	7	3.65	1.560
ServLead23	304	1	7	3.46	1.596
ServLead24	304	1	7	4.51	1.621
ServLead25	304	1	7	4.90	1.590
ServLead26	304	1	7	4.80	1.589
ServLead27	304	1	7	4.43	1.640
ServLead28	304	1	7	4.93	1.568
Valid N (listwise)	304				

a. Sample = Latin America

Sample = USA

**Table 5**

Descriptive Statistics <sup>a</sup>					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
ServLead1	277	1	7	4.56	2.063
ServLead2	277	1	7	5.33	1.628
ServLead3	277	1	7	5.17	1.730
ServLead4	277	1	7	4.60	1.808
ServLead5	277	1	7	4.51	1.813
ServLead6	277	1	7	4.57	1.787
ServLead7	277	1	7	4.40	1.852
ServLead8	277	1	7	3.81	1.791
ServLead9	277	1	7	4.82	1.701
ServLead10	277	1	7	5.34	1.479
ServLead11	277	1	7	5.73	1.347
ServLead12	277	1	7	5.27	1.484
ServLead13	277	1	7	5.17	1.628
ServLead14	277	1	7	5.03	1.602
ServLead15	277	1	7	4.93	1.689
ServLead16	277	1	7	4.12	1.717
ServLead17	277	1	7	4.41	1.787
ServLead18	277	1	7	4.77	1.796
ServLead19	277	1	7	5.06	1.655
ServLead20	277	1	7	4.87	1.796
ServLead21	277	1	7	3.81	1.793
ServLead22	277	1	7	3.80	1.760
ServLead23	277	1	7	3.69	1.667
ServLead24	277	1	7	4.70	1.701
ServLead25	277	1	7	5.32	1.688
ServLead26	277	1	7	5.22	1.681
ServLead27	277	1	7	5.23	1.673
ServLead28	277	1	7	5.10	1.688
Valid N (listwise)	277				

a. Sample = USA

**Table 6**

## Servant leadership items

- SL 1 I would seek help from my manager if I had a personal problem.
- SL 2 My manager cares about my personal well-being.
- SL 3 My manager takes time to talk to me on a personal level.
- SL 4 My manager can recognize when I'm down without asking me.
- SL 5 My manager emphasizes the importance of giving back to the community.
- SL 6 My manager is always interested in helping people in our community.
- SL 7 My manager is involved in community activities.
- SL 8 I am encouraged by my manager to volunteer in the community.
- SL 9 My manager can tell if something is going wrong.
- SL 10 My manager is able to effectively think through complex problems.
- SL 11 My manager has a thorough understanding of our organization and its goals.
- SL 12 My manager can solve work problems with new or creative ideas.
- SL 13 My manager gives me the responsibility to make important decisions about my job.
- SL 14 My manager encourages me to handle important work decisions on my own.
- SL 15 My manager gives me the freedom to handle difficult situations in the way that I feel is best.
- SL 16 When I have to make an important decision at work, I do not have to consult my manager first.
- SL 17 My manager makes my career development a priority.
- SL 18 My manager is interested in making sure that I achieve my career goals.
- SL 19 My manager provides me with work experiences that enable me to develop new skills.
- SL 20 My manager wants to know about my career goals.
- SL 21 My manager seems to care more about my success than his/her own.
- SL 22 My manager puts my best interests ahead of his/her own.
- SL 23 My manager sacrifices his/her own interests to meet my needs.
- SL 24 My manager does what she/he can do to make my job easier.
- SL 25 My manager holds high ethical standards.
- SL 26 My manager is always honest.
- SL 27 My manager would not compromise ethical principles in order to achieve success.
- SL 28 My manager values honesty more than profits.



**Figure 1**

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943)

