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Abstract
This presentation highlights findings from a study exploring the congregational health and church growth of more than 9,000 congregations from various denominations across United States. These congregations have used Natural Church Development survey to obtain a health assessment over the period of last 10 years. Findings reveal a fascinating pattern of church growth and health that is related to leadership style of the pastor. The data show that the churches whose pastors say their style of leadership is serving are actually growing less and have lower health scores than those who do not list their leadership style as serving. Serving as pastor's style of leadership predicts smaller size of church attendance.

Serving Leadership Style Revisited

When Greenleaf published his Servant Leadership book in 1977, it brought a fresh wind not just because his book was based on research as well as experience but because of the environment it came from. Greenleaf was not a theologian as the title would make people think but he was a long time AT&T in-house talent scout (Greenleaf 1998:280). His life-long focus was on raising servant leaders as he called them. His concept servant leadership has become the highest form of leadership for years to follow (Draft 2002; Russell & Stone 2002; Spears & Lawrence 2002; Stone, Russell & Patterson 2003; Parolini, Patterson & Winston 2009).

The term however was defined only vaguely. Greenleaf preferred to have the meaning of this term evolve. Nevertheless he asked important questions: “How can we ordinary morals lead . . . to be more serving in this turbulent world?” “What does it mean to serve?” (Greenleaf 1998: 31). Other researchers were trying to define this term later on (Laub 2004) or develop an instrument to measure it (Page & Wong 2000). Greenleaf researched and applied his concept onto governments, organizations, institutions as well as churches. His concept has laid a conceptual foundation for our study of serving leadership style in relationship to health and growth of the churches.
This study builds on the work of these scholars by examining data from the Natural Church Development (NCD) survey. In the last 25 years, this survey has generated 70,000 church profiles in 70 countries across various denominations. For the first time, we have access to the NCD data in the United States. The NCD survey developed by Schwarz has been used to scientifically measure the quality index (eight qualities) of churches (Schwarz 1996, Schalk 1999). The congregational health index is measured based on 30 surveys from one congregation. Along the church members surveys there is a pastors’ form with various independent variables incl. five years of church attendance, pastor’s leadership style, etc. This particular study examines the relationship between leadership styles and church growth and church health.

Methodology
Using a subsample of US congregational data of over 9000 churches from various denominations, this secondary analysis examines the intersection of leadership style and church health. Using the Compound Average Growth Rate, with five categories of health (unhealthy, average unhealthy, average healthy, healthy and very healthy) and three categories of church attendance size (small, medium, large), we compare the difference “serving” pastor makes in their churches on overall measures of church health and Compound Average Growth rate using chi square analysis. We also use a multiple regression analysis to see if serving leadership style (among other 8 leadership styles) is a predictor of any of the three dependent variables listed above.

Findings
The chi square analysis reveals that, in general, churches with “serving” pastor measure significantly lower on measures of health than churches with “non-serving” pastor (p < .05). When looking at the Annual Growth Rate, chi square analysis shows that the churches with “serving” pastor are growing at a lower rate than churches with “non-serving” pastor (p < .05). A multiple linear regression was calculated to predict church attendance size based on 9 various leadership styles of a pastor. A significant regression equation was found with serving leadership style (F(1,8780) = 151.472, p < .000), $R^2 = .017$. Out of the nine leadership styles the serving as well as democratic style came out as the least profitable styles for church health, growth and size. On the other hand, the most helpful styles appeared to be team-based and goal-oriented leadership styles.

Conclusions
These findings raise question in relationship to the previous findings. Servant or serving leadership has been for decades ranked as a top model of leadership among secular organizations and also among churches. However, our finding shows that “serving” pastor plays rather a negative role both in quality (health) of church life and quantitative growth of the church. “Serving” pastor likely to lead small churches rather than medium or larger churches.

We found that for growing healthy churches there are other leadership styles used than the “serving” leadership style. While “servant leadership” has been very much valued and highly regarded, our findings point out that serving style may have a different meaning and connotation for pastors than all those who adhere to the Servant Leadership model of Greenleaf. This study demonstrates that it is helpful and important to have clear
definition of leadership style rather than letting an idea or label evolve among leaders depending on their own perception and their own assumptions of what serving actually means.

**References**


