



ἀρετή
Arete

Journal of Excellence in Global Leadership



Vol 3, #1
2025



About the Journal

Αρετή (Arete) Journal of Excellence in Global Leadership offers a platform that encourages theory development, theory-related discussion, and action projects from multiple disciplines with the aspiration of generating commentary and debate. Besides regular full-length submissions, Αρετή publishes teaching case studies, perspective-taking essays, posters and critical essays that contribute to the conversation regarding a problem or issue.

Arete is published in collaboration with the Global Leadership Institute, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, and the Private Academic Library Network (PALNI). It is a global, **peer-reviewed open-access journal** that publishes to a broad audience who appreciate the intellectual breadth of a global theoretical framework. Authors **are NOT charged a fee**. Please visit our [editorial team](#) if you have questions.

Current Issue

Vol. 3 No. 1 (2025): αρετή (Arete) Journal of Excellence in Global Leadership

Αρετή: A fundamental principle for Greek culture is αρετή (Arete). Arete is an ancient Greek word meaning excellence or virtue. To Greeks, Arete means excellence in reaching one's full potential.

Αρετή (Arete) is published in collaboration with the Global Leadership Institute and Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, and The Private Academic Library Network of Indiana (PALNI). It is a global, peer-reviewed open-access journal that is published to a broad audience who appreciate the intellectual breadth of a global theoretical framework.

Sponsors



**Αρετή (Arete)
Journal of Excellence in Global Leadership
Editorial Board**



Editor in Chief:
Jennie L. Mitchell, Ph.D.
Emerita Professor
SMWC



Section Editor:
Kim LaComba, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
SMWC



Layout/Copy-editing
Kourtney Barrett
Leadership Program Specialist
SMWC

Taiwo Ande, Ph.D., MBA, Associate Provost for Education Effectiveness, Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO), California Lutheran University, California, USA

Magdalena María de las Mercedes Barreiro, Ph.D. – College of Business Administration and Economics, Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ), Ecuador,

Janet Clark, Ph.D. Provost/Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, Indiana, USA

Nicholas W. Farha, Ph.D. Asst. Teaching Professor – Adjunct Missouri State University, Springfield, MO, USA

Dan Hiltz, Ph.D., Adjunct Professor – Ph.D. in Global Leadership, Graduate Certificate in Women's Leadership Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, Indiana, USA

Eric Hubbard, MLD, Ph.D. Program Director: MLD/MBA/MHA Assistant Professor of Leadership Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, Indiana, USA

Efthalia (Lina) Massou, PhD. Research Associate in Statistics Department of Public Health and Primary Care, University of Cambridge, UK

Somer Nourse, DNP, RN, CNE, Associate Professor Nursing, Indiana State University, School of Nursing, Indiana, USA

Professor Marcelo Echagüe Pastore, Ph.D. Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence 2023-2024 at Indiana State University, Indiana, USA

Jill Paxton, M.S. Assistant Teaching Professor – Animal Science, Iowa State University, Iowa, USA

Julia Porter, Ph.D., Adjunct Professor, Ph.D. in Global Leadership and Change, Tiffin University, USA

Gerasimos (Makie) Prodromitiis, Ph.D. Professor, Director Laboratory of Experimental Social Psychology, Department of Psychology, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, Syngrou, Athens

Douglas Sperry, Ph.D. Associate Professor of Psychology, IRB board, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, Indiana, USA

Howard (Rusty) Tryon, MLS, DMin. Assistant Professor, Director of Rooney Library, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, Indiana, USA

Robert Vandermolen, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Mathematics, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, Indiana, USA

Franklin Gustavo Velasco, Ph.D. Associate Professor of Marketing, College of Business Adm. and Economics, Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ), Ecuador

DJ Wasmer, Ph.D. Emeritus Professor Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, Indiana, USA

Penny Quinn, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Business and Leadership, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, Indiana US

Two New Submission Types

Αρετή (Arete) Journal of Excellence in Global Leadership offers two new submission types, instructional teaching cases and posters. Both submission types follow the double-blind peer-review process.

More about Instructional Teaching Cases

In August 2023, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College (SMWC) was awarded a \$49,590 grant from the U.S. Embassy in Greece to fund the Greek and American Gender Equality (GAGE) Program. This initiative was designed to address gender equality challenges in Greece. SMWC partnered with the University of West Attica (UNIWA) in Athens, Greece, to strengthen educational ties and foster student mobility. Together, the institutions developed gender equality case studies that were applied to various types of organizations within the Greek economy. The program featured case study workshops, immersive study abroad experiences, cross-cultural collaboration, multidimensional mentorship, and opportunities to publish the resulting work. These efforts aimed to generate significant social impact, contributing to improving Greece's ranking in gender equality among EU nations.

It is important to differentiate between 'case study as a teaching methodology' and case study as an approach, genre, or method in educational research. When used as a teaching method, case studies leverage their core attributes—such as the richness of real-world data and lived experiences—to provide learners with valuable insights into diverse perspectives and make the learning process more engaging and dynamic.

Understanding the difference between a case study as a 'teaching methodology' and a case study as an approach or method in educational research is an important distinction as it serves different purposes. When used for teaching, the focus is to engage individuals in real world situations and lived experiences, cultivate curiosity, problem solving, decision making, critical thinking and practical application (BU Center for Teaching and Learning, n.d.; Oxford University Press, n.d.). Case studies in educational research, however, are designed to generate knowledge and contribute to generating theory (Oxford University Press, n.d.). This volume has the first case published from this experience.

More about Posters

In 2024, the Arete Editorial Board expanded submissions to include peer-reviewed posters that clearly elaborate on how the contribution impacts globally and are assessed for clarity, rigor, analysis, validity, and of course, Global Leadership. The posters require a 5–7-minute recording. This volume has the first published poster.

References:

BU Center for Teaching and Learning. (2025). Using case studies to teach. Using Case Studies to Teach | Center for Teaching & Learning. <https://www.bu.edu/ctl/resources/teaching-resources/using-case-studies-to-teach/>

Oxford University Press. (2025). Case study in education research. Oxford Bibliographies. <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199756810/obo-9780199756810-0201.xml>



The Emerging Servant Leadership and the False Narrative Among Air Force Chaplains

Lorrie Lane Dyer, Ph.D.

MLD and MBA Adjunct Instructor

Saint Mary-of-the Woods College, Indiana, USA

Abstract

Background: Air Force chaplains face the duality of serving as servant leader ministers and competitive Air Force officers. This research identified that limited research exists on balancing this dichotomy (Berry, 2015; Davis, 2011; Earnhardt, 2008; Reinke, 2004; Sampayo & Maranga, 2019). **Objectives:** Explore how Air Force chaplains balance the dichotomy of service (defined as servant leadership) and self (defined as self-first to receive promotion) in a hierarchical organizational culture. **Methods/Approach:** Action research (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014) was chosen for this study due to its collaborative approach and cyclical nature, which reveal new knowledge. The researcher analyzed data by implementing Saldaña's (2016) streamlined Codes-to-Theory. Reflection journal and session data were included in the data analysis. Air Force chaplains from different faith groups, ranks, and time in service uncovered shared challenges and applicable solutions. **Results:** Inquiry outcomes identified the False Narrative and the Great Divide. Outcomes analysis revealed an emerging servant leadership culture, the importance of character, and fulfilling duties in a pluralistic environment. **Implications:** Findings indicate the False Narrative, the Great Divide, character, and fulfilling duties in a pluralistic environment play a role in how Air Force chaplains carry out their duties to serve and care for Airmen and offer guidance to leadership, impacting the Air Force's local and global missions. **Conclusions:** Findings suggest intentional actions encouraging the emerging cultural change require acknowledging and dispelling the False Narrative, addressing the Great Divide, and providing leadership skills training that nurtures the emerging servant leadership culture while addressing identified concerns.

Keywords: leadership; Air Force chaplains; servant leadership; organizational culture; collaboration; global mission, False Narrative

Paper type: Research article

Citation: Dyer, L. L. (2025). The emerging servant leadership and the false narrative among air force chaplains. *Αρετή (Arete) Journal of Excellence in Global Leadership*, 3(1). 137-161. <https://doi.org/10.59319/arete.v3i1.897>.

Introduction

Air Force chaplains are civilian ministers who were elected to join the Air Force and were selected for their faith element of a core value of service before self (Ali, 2009; Allen, 2016; Butler & Herman, 1999; Estocin, 2016; Harper, n.d; Rocca, 2013). The Air Force's second core value is service before self (U.S. Air Force, 2019). However, Air Force chaplains face challenges that civilian ministers and other Air Force officers do not face. They experience the tension between service (servant leadership) and self (getting promoted). "Getting Promoted" is a term commonly used by military members regarding earning rank, like advancement in corporate organizations. "Getting promoted" will be referred to throughout this "receiving promotion". Receiving a promotion in the Air Force requires individuals to stand out among their peers to receive a commander's recommendation for promotion (Smith, 2019). It can be highly competitive, even among chaplains. It is a common belief that to receive a promotion, one must put yourself before others, and there is pressure to go above and beyond and do more than your peers.

Chaplains are Air Force Officers and like other Air Force members, many adhere to a commonly held misperception it is necessary to put self before service to be competitive for promotion (The Secretary of the Air Force, 2015; Washington, 2019). Chaplains are often guided by their call as ministers and faith leaders. However, they must strive to balance their call as ministers and fulfill the Air Force's second core value (service before self, servant leadership) with the requirement to fulfill their duties as Air Force Officers in a hierarchical organizational culture (The Secretary of the Air Force, 2015; U.S. Air Force, 2019; Washington, 2019).

Chaplains are not exempt from the competitive promotion system all Air Force Officers face within each career field (Pawlyk, 2019). Although the Air Force's second core value is service before self, the Air Force's organizational culture is hierarchical. This hierarchical culture and organizational structure can and has sometimes created toxic leadership (Piellusch, 2017). Air Force chaplains are not excluded from this hierarchical organizational culture, including experiencing toxic leadership and creating toxic leadership. Just like every other position in the Air Force, there is a rank within the Air Force Chaplain Corps, and chaplains must meet the same standards as other Air Force Officers while adhering to the hierarchical nature of the Air Force.

The hierarchical culture and organizational structure of the Air Force is what is referred to as top-down leadership. It begins with the Commander in Chief, trickling down to each individual Airman. Like many large international organizations, the Air Force has many layers in its complex organizational structure, including the Chaplain Corps.

Within the Air Force, there are smaller hierarchical organizational cultures. For example, the Air Force Chaplain Corps exists within the Air Force's hierarchical organizational culture. In addition to the Air Force's hierarchical culture, the Air Force Chaplain Corps has its own organizational culture, and within the Chaplain Corps are chapels located at different installations globally. Each chapel has its own organizational culture influenced, created, and nurtured by its Wing Chaplain leader and base leadership. Each chapel culture exists within the Chaplain Corps culture which exists and functions within the larger Air Force hierarchical organizational culture. Air Force chaplains must navigate numerous complexities of the hierarchical organizational cultures as ministers, officers, and leaders.

Air Force chaplains face the practical problem of finding the equilibrium between service before self (servant leadership) and self before service (being competitive for promotion). The practical problem is exacerbated due to the pressure to receive a promotion or face the possibility of having to get out of the Air Force based on the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act, established in 1980, requiring officers to be discharged if they are not promoted on the second attempt (Rostker et al., 1993). This is often unofficially referred to as the *up-or-out* policy. Officers are pressured to make an impression on promotion boards, stand out above the crowds, or end their Air Force career (Rostker et al., 1993; Schirmer et al., 2006; Shane, 2018). The *up-or-out* concept means job security or lack of job security (Millsaps, 1983). The pressure chaplains feel from leadership to receive a promotion combined with personal obligations can impact a chaplain's ability to fulfil their roles as servant leaders and fulfil the Air Force's second core value. In 2020, the Air Force implemented new revisions to the promotion system, where majors compete against one another in smaller, more specialized communities. As of 2025, promotion from Major to Lieutenant Colonel has a total promotion rate of 50.4% in all categories (Hadley, 2024). Chaplains continue to have some of the highest promotion rates, with 28 out of 35 chaplains selected for promotion to Major (Air Force Personnel Center Public Affairs, 2023).

A minister's core value is to put service before self, which in a promotion-based culture can present a unique problem (Ali, 2009; Allen, 2016; Butler & Herman, 1999; Estocin, 2016; Harper, n.d.; Rocca, 2013). The belief that receiving a promotion requires putting oneself before service to stand out above the crowd can lead to internal and external conflicts for ministers and servant leaders. The pressure is exacerbated if one has a leader who subscribes to the antiquated belief that one must be more competitive and do more, above and beyond their peers. The Air Force is serious about removing leaders who have a history of leadership concerns, such as The Air Force's second-highest ranking religious leader, Brigadier General James Daniel Brantingham (Lehrfeld, 2023). Brantingham was only in the position for a little over a year when higher leadership removed him due to loss of confidence in his abilities in January of 2022 (Lehrfeld, 2023).

Little research explores this real-life quandary Air Force chaplains face. Additionally, few studies exist on servant leadership in a military setting (Berry, 2015; Davis, 2011; Earnhardt, 2008; Reinke, 2004; Sampayo & Maranga, 2019). Earnhardt's (2008) study discovered that based on Patterson's (2003) constructs of servant leadership: love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service, servant leadership can and does work in a military setting. However, it does not address how military members or chaplains, in particular, balance service (servant leadership) and self (promotion). A gap was identified in how servant leaders balance servant leadership with career advancement, although one study examined how different leadership styles assisted women in promotions (Vinkenburge et al., 2011).

An examination of 270 studies published between 1998 and 2018 revealed significantly more quantitative empirical research on servant leadership than qualitative manuscripts, with just 28 qualitative studies, eight mixed methods, and 158 quantitative (Eva et al., 2019). None of the studies examined how Air Force chaplains

balance service (servant leadership) and self (promotion). This revealed a significant gap needed for qualitative servant leadership studies informed by theory (Dyer, 2021).

Only one study focused specifically on leadership among Air Force chaplains (Costin, 2009). However, it focused primarily on Wing Chaplains, not chaplains of all ranks and positions. Additionally, although the Wing Chaplain Leadership Model (WCLM) used in the study identified servant leadership as the fifth most important factor to Wing Chaplains, it did not adequately address how chaplains balance servant leadership and career progressions (i.e. promotion) (Costin, 2009). However, it did reveal that Ministry Practice was the lowest-ranking factor identified by Wing Chaplains, leaving room to explore why Ministry Practice ranked so low, particularly with Wing Chaplains ranking servant leadership as the 5th most important factor (Costin, 2009).

One study suggested that servant leadership may not work in military cultures because it is impractical and unrealistic in such a setting (Bowie, 2000). Military hierarchical organizational cultures are prime candidates to create toxic leadership (Piellusch, 2017). Servant leadership could abate toxic leadership concerns in military settings (Wong & Davey, 2007). However, further research on defining servant leadership within a culture is also needed (Mittal & Dorman, 2012).

Methodology

Action Research

Action Research was identified as the best form of research for this study because it “focuses on the relations and interaction between action and knowledge” (Eikeland, 2007, p. 346). Additionally, action research is cyclical in nature, pulling participants in and inviting them to share and work together to identify and solve problems while developing new shared knowledge (McFrand & Stansell, 1993). It was coupled with Heron’s (1996) co-operative inquiry due to its suitability to involve all members in deciding what questions should be explored and how they would explore the selected questions, as well as allowing them to explore their shared experience of coping with and balancing service (servant leadership) and self (career progression/promotion).

This research study sought to identify how Air Force chaplains navigate these complexities while balancing service and self. Three research questions guided this study:

1. How do Air Force chaplains define servant leadership in a military setting?
2. How do they manage the dichotomy, and how do they create equilibrium between service to others and service for self?
3. Might servant leadership help them do that?

Theoretical Framework

When a minister decides to join the Air Force as a chaplain, they bring years of ministerial experience as servant leaders. Guided by the minister’s servant leadership inclination and the Air Force’s requirement in its second Core Value (service before self), servant leadership was the ideal theoretical framework for this study (Earnhardt, 2008; Patterson, 2003).

Seven active-duty Air Force chaplains participated in this four-month study. The monthly meetings were conducted via Zoom and lasted one and a half to two hours

each. The first monthly meeting (Cycle 1) began with the three prepared researcher questions. These questions laid the foundation for the research and initiated meaningful conversations that lead to matters of greater concern for chaplains. At the end of the first meeting the chaplains developed a new question based on what they identified and agreed upon as most pressing for them as Air Force chaplains. They discussed what action would be appropriate for them to take to explore and find answers to the question they agreed upon. When the chaplains came back together for the second monthly meeting (Cycle 2) the chaplains started off by sharing what they learned by taking the agreed upon actions from the Cycle 1 meeting. They shared their reflections and significant insights gained from implementing the agreed upon action. From these shared insights and discussions, the chaplains uncovered more concerns. After much discussion the chaplains once again identified the most pressing issue and determined what action they would take for the next month. This process took place once more when they came together for Cycle 3. Participants were of different ranks, positions, and lengths of time in the Air Force as a chaplain and were from various religious faith groups, ethnic backgrounds, and ranks.

Between meetings, participants experimented with new behaviors to see how and if these new behaviors helped them manage the practical problems and dichotomy they faced each day as ministers, Air Force chaplains, and Officers. Each participant maintained reflection journals. These journals included thoughts and reflections on what was discussed during meetings, what came to mind because of discussions, and notations regarding the outcomes as they implemented agreed-upon actions. Reflexivity was implemented throughout the study to help participants sort through their thoughts and ideas, enabling them to determine what they found helpful and what did not work to help them better understand their beliefs of service and self in the context of being an Air Force chaplain.

Ethical concerns were identified and addressed, and solutions were ascertained. For example, confidentiality was an identified concern. Confidentiality was not a foreign concept to the participants; it is required of Air Force chaplains. Therefore, each participant was amicable in maintaining confidentiality throughout the study and expressed verbal consent. Ethical concerns were identified regarding dealing with potentially emotional or sensitive subjects. Although all participants were experienced in providing counseling, each participant was given contact information for mental health services for active-duty members, as well as seven free mental health resources, a 1-800 option to access mental health care professionals who cater to military members and families 24 hours a day, seven days a week (Military One Source, 2019).

Analysis

Each Zoom session was recorded, transcribed, and verified for accuracy (Creswell, 2013). The data was categorized, analyzed, and sorted by sentiment, themes, and attributes (Neuman, 2011). Themes were identified using Saldaña's (2016) Codes-to-Theory Model for qualitative inquiry, leading to the identification of shared group responses, connections, and comparisons among themes from the collected study data.

Data was analyzed inductively to better understand solutions to the duplicity participants experienced with the Air Force promotion system and servant leadership.

Group session data underwent the analysis process three times to ensure accuracy. Additional steps of triangulation (Flick, 2018), member checking, and rechecking to reduce discrepancies (including reduced reactivity, research, and participant biases) were implemented to ensure the fidelity and trustworthiness of the data (Padgett, 2017). A confidential space was provided for participants to share their notes freely and discuss the ups and downs they experienced in the study. Nonjudgmental support was provided in the Peer Debriefing and Support group (PDS) to help preserve the honesty and integrity of the research throughout the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Field notes provided additional data and insights, undergoing a process similar to that of group data, which was transcribed, coded, and verified for accuracy (Creswell, 2013). Triangulation (Flick, 2018) and rechecking (Padgett, 2017) were also implemented. Field notes included notes on body language and demeanors from the initial individual interviews, the group work sessions, and notes from the researchers' reflections and thoughts on biases, which were identified and examined through reflexivity. Bracketing also helped ensure fidelity and trust. All data was synthesized, revealing new knowledge and solutions determined by participants, including their experiences with the dichotomy of service (servant leadership) and self (Air Force promotions) (Saldaña, 2016).

Cycle 1

Participants were asked the three research questions:

1. How do Air Force chaplains define servant leadership in a military setting?
2. How do they manage the dichotomy, and how do they create equilibrium between service to others and service for self?
3. Might servant leadership help them do that.

Participants initially discussed their thoughts on the three research questions. However, it was question two that guided them to uncover a specific question they wanted to explore further. Based on this question, they discussed and identified what course of action they would take over the next thirty days in an attempt to answer this question.

In Cycle 2, participants came together again restating the question they focused on in the actions they took throughout the month since they last met. This question and their findings were once again tied to the second research question. Each participant shared and discussed their findings. In this conversation they determined their findings warranted further exploration and agreed upon a plan of action to take during the next month.

In Cycle 3, participants restated the question they focused on in the actions they took throughout the month since they last met. This question and their findings were connected to both research questions 2 and 3. Cycle 3 concluded identifying numerous insights, as well as the need for further research.

Results

The study aimed to understand better how Air Force chaplains balance the dichotomy of service and self. Organic discussions took place, guided by practical problems faced daily as Air Force chaplains and Officers. Driven by the initial questions presented in

this study, discussions diverged and took their unique paths. These discussions moved past surface-level inquiries to reveal deeper concerns, identifying pivotal insights into their lived experiences, struggles, and solutions as they attempted to balance service and self as Air Force chaplains. Table 1 highlights the significant findings from this action research and how the participants in this study defined each major finding.

Table 1
Major Results

Name of Result	False Narrative	The Great Divide: Two Major Definitions of an Air Force Chaplain	Emerging Servant Leadership Matters	Character	Pluralism
Result Defined by Participants	A False Narrative Exists and perpetuates the belief that Air Force Chaplains cannot take care of Airmen and get promoted.	The Air Force Instruction Manual's definition or Chaplains who feel they are called to share their religion with others	Leaders mentor and desired behaviors and influence their followers	Character makes a difference	If you can't exist in a pluralistic environment, being a chaplain is not for you.

Note: Major findings from the study.

Source: Author's illustration, 2024, adapted from *Air Force chaplains balancing the scales: The dichotomy between service before self and self before service*, by Dyer, 2021, p. 104. (Publication No. 28775633) ProQuest Dissertations and Thesis Global. Copyright 2021 by Dyer.

In Cycle, 1, the research questions, particularly the second question, led participants to explore whether receiving a promotion depends upon balancing service to Airmen and self-serving. Varying opinions emerged. Participants agreed that this required further investigation and exploration and decided to consult colleagues regarding this issue (Dyer, 2021).

In Cycle 2, participants' discussions continued to evolve from research question 2. Participants stated that many chaplains shared the belief that they had to choose between service and self to receiving a promotion, which they identified as the False Narrative. The group discussed the False Narrative and decided to continue this discussion in greater detail with their colleagues (Dyer, 2021).

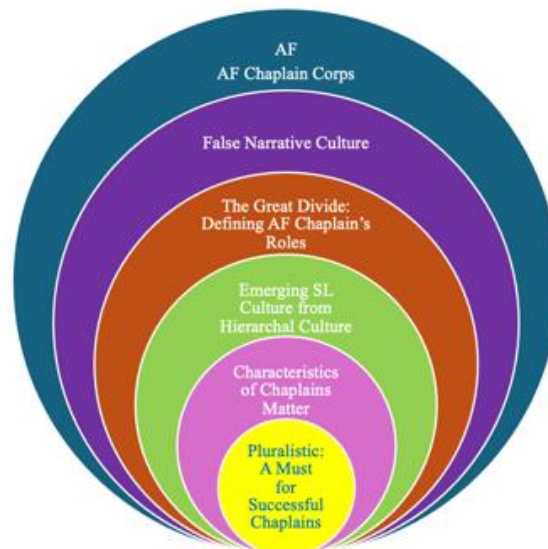
In Cycle 3, participants reported that in their conversations with colleagues, they discovered that the False Narrative was real and was perpetuated by leadership. Participants identified two definitions of an being an Air Force chaplain:

1. Chaplains guided by the Air Force Instruction 52-101 (AFI52-101).
2. Chaplains guided by their religion.

Participants called this The Great Divide.

In addition to the two primary outcomes three additional outcomes revealed themselves as an Emergent Servant Leadership, the implication of the role of Individual Characteristics (on how a chaplain carried out his role), and the significance of Pluralism (being able to perform one's duties in a pluralistic environment). Five pivotal insights also emerged: servant leadership implementation, the necessity of time for reflection and discussions with their peers, the importance and role of a chaplain's experience, and being a minister versus an organizational leader, and that servant leadership was not identified as helping chaplains find a balance between service and self. It was revealed that each inquiry outcome is entwined, affecting one another, creating an Air Force Chaplain Corps Holon.

Figure 1
Air Force Chaplain Inquiry Outcomes Holon



Source: Author's illustration, 2024, adapted from *Air Force chaplains balancing the scales: The dichotomy between service before self and self before service*, by Dyer, 2021, p. 97. (Publication No. 28775633) ProQuest Dissertations and Thesis Global. Copyright 2021 by Dyer.

Discussion

The study sought to answer three questions:

1. How do Air Force chaplains define servant leadership in a military setting?
2. How do they manage the dichotomy, and how do they create equilibrium between service before self and self before service?
3. Might servant leadership help them do that?

The study did not answer how Air Force chaplains define servant leadership in a military setting. Servant leadership was not identified to help Air Force chaplains manage the dichotomy of service and self or how to create an equilibrium between

service and self. However, it did reveal an emerging servant leadership culture. Participants also emphasized the importance of taking time for reflection and engaging in discussions with their peers. It was revealed that experience help chaplains navigate the challenges unique to them as they served as Air Force chaplains and experience comes from serving time in the Air Force as a chaplain and understanding the difference with being a minister versus an organizational leader. These pivotal insights were identified as contributing to a chaplain's ability to provide care and guidance to Airmen and leadership as they strive to accomplish local and global missions.

Chaplains uncovered what they collectively named the False Narrative. The False Narrative is pressure from leadership to receive a promotion, also referred to in this study as having to choose serving self over serving Airmen. The False Narrative most likely appeared out of necessity when receiving a promotion was highly competitive and being relieved of duty from the Air Force for not receiving a promotion on the second try was common. Times have changed now. At the time of the study, this was particularly true with a 90% promotion rate for chaplains from Captain to Major (Losey, 2020) who stayed in the Air Force, did not have documented reprimand, obtained their Professional Military Education and passed their physical fitness tests, would receive a promotion beyond captain (Dyer, 2021, p. 79). A point emphasized by chaplains. A promotion to captain is automatically earned for a chaplain. Receiving a promotion beyond captain is traditionally considered very competitive among chaplains. However, chaplains stated that if one did what they were supposed to and stayed out of trouble, they would receive a promotion.

Although it was determined that the False Narrative was now untrue, chaplains consulted peers, discovering that this myth was still alive and perpetuated by leadership. Junior chaplains, with less experience in a military setting, especially felt the impact of the False Narrative with pressure from leadership to go the extra mile to be competitive with their peers so they would stand out during promotion boards. The False Narrative suggests that chaplain leadership, individuals in positions of higher rank and authority, such as Wing Chaplains, perpetuate the antiquated belief that the only way chaplains can receive a promotion is to put self before service, leading to unnecessary tension between service and self. They also agreed that breaking the False Narrative culture was problematic for chaplains who were not in leadership positions because they needed more influence to make such a cultural shift (Dyer, 2021). Although each Airmen can lead in certain circumstances, chaplains in this study were referring to leadership positions such as Wing Chaplains who model leadership behaviors and have the power to make decisions for the chapel and the Airmen they lead

Failure to purge this false ideology not only hinders the emerging servant leadership culture but leads to the belief and pressure to choose self-interest over serving airmen, which impacts their ability to provide the care, and services Airmen need to perform their duties effectively. Failure of Airmen to perform their duties impacts the local mission, which impacts the global mission of the Air Force.

Senior chaplains shared that it was only through lived experience that they learned how to balance service and self. One senior chaplain used the image of a three-legged stool and how each leg must be balanced to keep the stool level to illustrate the challenge of balancing service and self.

Participant 3 stated, “We all have to try to balance and in keeping that stool (in) a very, very even, so you’re not tilting on one side or the other and it, it’s a juggling act and I think personally for me, when I first came in, the stool wasn’t ever even. It took me a few years to figure out how to put it all together.”

Dispelling the False Narrative requires organizational change, which participants said would only be possible if leadership took the initiative to break the cycle of passing on the belief that chaplains can only receive a promotion if they put self before service. Participants stated that it was irrelevant to leaders if chaplains can care for Airmen; they (leaders) were looking for chaplains who pursue organizational growth and leadership. They shared that there was no need to be competitive (put self before service) or behave aggressively to receive a promotion (Dyer, 2021). Chaplains determined they could care for Airmen and receive a promotion.

With the discovery of the servant leadership culture emerging from the traditionally hierarchical organizational culture, servant leadership culture could be a steppingstone to help dispel the harmful and useless False Narrative if intentional action is taken by leadership to support the emerging servant leadership culture.

This may be a challenge as servant leadership was not identified as a preferred leadership of chaplains. However, the study concluded and aligns with previous research on leadership, which states that leadership matters. As demonstrated in the findings from the study, particularly among junior chaplains, leaders impact followers positively and negatively, and they impact morale, work performance, and organizational culture (Green et al., 2015; Saleen et al., 2020; Schaubroeck et al., 2001; Yukl, 2013). Leadership's impact on junior chaplains was a theme throughout the study, aligning with Coston's (2009) findings that Wing Chaplains needed adequate training, and leadership was also a concern.

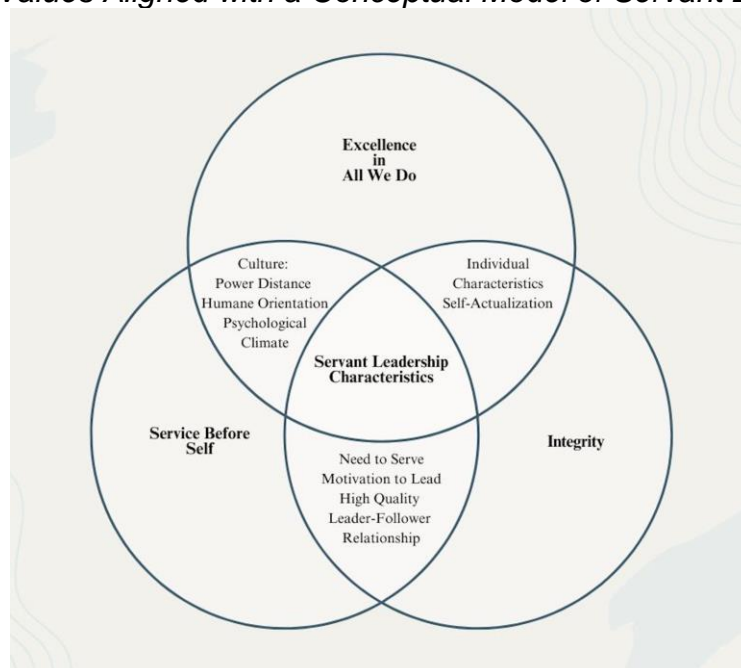
Research has suggested that servant leadership may be too impractical and unrealistic to work in military settings (Piellusch, 2017). Other research indicates that servant leadership in military settings could mitigate toxic leadership (Wong & Davey, 2007) and that it does work (Earnhardt, 2008). As the servant leadership culture emerges within the Chaplain Corps, it must be kept in mind that servant leadership must be defined based on culture (Mittal & Dorman, 2012).

Air Force leadership encourages servant leadership, which is often the nature of ministers (who become chaplains) and aligns with the Air Force's second core value, *service before self* (U.S. Air Force, 2019; Greenleaf, 2002). According to Chief Master Sergeant Tyrone Davis (2011), leaders are called to serve, and those who serve do so by implementing servant leadership. Air Force Chief of Staff General David Goldfein emphasized the importance of servant leadership to Air Force Academy Cadets in his presentation at the National Character and Leadership Symposium on February 25, 2019, stating that his time at the Air Force Academy helped him develop an understanding of what it means to be a servant leader and the value of servant leadership (Bowden, 2019). Colonel Charles Barkhurst (2021) emphasized the role of servant leadership in the Air Force and its impact on the mission, "Servant leaders give before they receive. If you take care of your Airmen, they will take care of the mission" (para. 4). Colonel Clark is another Air Force servant leader demonstrating how through

servant leadership all Airmen can fulfill the Air Forces second core value of *service before self* (Fischer, 2020).

Although there are numerous examples of Air Force leadership implementing servant leadership, leadership on all levels, especially top Air Force leadership (Pentagon, Major Command leadership, etc...), the Chaplain Corps, and chapels at installations globally, must be on board with implementing servant leadership. Servant leadership requires “the servant-lead is servant first” (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 27). This study revealed that not all chaplains are servant leaders, which may indicate that not all Air Force leaders are inclined to be servant leaders either and that when you are in the Air Force as a minister, chaplain the Air Force’s concern is with one’s leadership potential, not if you are a good chaplain. Servant leadership was identified as the fifth important factor among Wing Chaplains (Costin, 2009), laying the foundation for the Chaplain Corps to nurture the emerging servant leadership culture. The Air Force Core Values (U.S. Air Force, 2019) align with van Dierendonck’s (2010) Conceptual Model of Servant Leadership, as indicated in the *Air Force Core Values Aligned with A Conceptual Model of Servant Leadership* (Figure 2).

Figure 2
Air Force Core Values Aligned with a Conceptual Model of Servant Leadership



Note. Air Force Core Values aligned with the findings from *A Conceptual Model of Servant Leadership* by Dirk van Dierendonck, *Servant Leadership: A Review and Synthesis*, 2010, p. 1233. Source: Author’s illustration, 2024.

Numerous benefits have been associated with servant leadership, such as committed employees, high-quality relationships, team effectiveness (Carter & Baghurst, 2013;1, 2020), and professional success (Blanchard & Broadwell, 2018). Nurturing the development and growth of servant leaders could also lead to high performance among chaplains (Clear et al., 2014; Carter & Baghurst, 2013; van Dierendonck, 2010). As servant leadership is implemented, the Air Force Chaplain Corps can expect to see chaplains (employees) that experience an awakening, are developing, and are engaged (van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2010), as well as benefiting those chaplains

serve such as Airmen, their families, and leadership, all while aligning with the chaplain's mission.

Understanding the emerging servant leadership in the context of the Great Divide is essential and begins with understanding the two roles identified in the Great Divide. This is significant because each definition and understanding of the roles of an Air Force chaplain impacts how they carry out their duties and responsibilities. The first definition is each chaplain's understanding of their role as an Air Force chaplain, which is related to the individual's calling to minister in their religion and according to their religion. The second definition is based solely on the Air Force Chaplain's Corps AFI52-101. AFI52-101 clearly defines the roles and expectations of an Air Force Chaplain (The Secretary of the Air Force, 2021).

Chaplains. In accordance with 10 USC, § 8067 (h), chaplains provide religious worship and rites, religious accommodation, pastoral care, unit engagement, counseling, and spiritual care. Chaplains will not perform duties incompatible with their endorsing organizations or professional role and will remain in a noncombatant status. (T-0). Chaplains will not serve in any military capacity other than those specific duties contained in the 52XX Specialty Description found in the Air Force Officer Classification Directory, which is available at <https://www.afpc.af.mil/Classification>. (T-1). (p. 7).

AFI52-101 leaves room for chaplains to carry out their duties as servant leaders without compromising their religious beliefs or those of the Airmen they serve. The definition a chaplain defines as an individual does not offer a clear path toward servant leadership in a military setting because it is according to their religion, which may prevent them from serving Airmen whose beliefs and practices do not align with theirs. Servant leadership requires one to serve all, as does AFI52-101, regardless of the chaplains or the Airmen they are serving religious beliefs.

Chaplains concluded that some ministers may not be suited to be Air Force chaplains because they cannot set aside their civilian minister role to embrace what it means to be an Air Force chaplain. This conversation opened the door to explore what was important to them. They agreed that what was important was what chaplains value and their understanding of their role as an Air Force chaplain. However, they wanted to explore this to uncover a more profound understanding of the role of an Air Force chaplain through reflective journaling (Dyer, 2021).

The profound significance of the Great Divide revealed the impact of each chaplain's understanding of what an Air Force chaplain meant and its influence on how they carried out their responsibilities as a chaplain. Chaplains had different opinions regarding their roles and understanding of what being an Air Force chaplain meant. Still, they agreed that each chaplain's character, personality, values, upbringing, culture, faith, integrity, honesty, motivation, and personality also influenced how they carried out their duties (Dyer, 2021, p. 81). Participants also agreed that according to AFI52-101, chaplains should be persons of faith. However, they expressed that the reality was different.

Some pivotal insights identified in this study that align with servant leadership revealed that chaplains need to openly and honestly discuss their daily challenges and

experiences with other chaplains. Chaplains said that to ensure they do not lose sight of what is important, they needed time for reflection, conversations, and opportunities to reconnect with why they joined the Air Force, to reconnect with their beliefs and values, and how their responses impacted their ability to be effective chaplains. Participants emphasized the importance of connecting with other Air Force chaplains by participating in peer discussions about their daily lived experiences. These insights were identified as impacting their ability to provide service to Airmen, impacting the global mission of the Air Force, which ties back to falling victim to the False Narrative.

The participants identified the necessity of being able to perform one's duty in a pluralistic environment and that it requires chaplains to step outside their beliefs to provide care for all Airmen. This may be necessary, for example, as one chaplain shared when the chaplain provided counseling for an individual who defined marriage differently. A chaplain described operating in a pluralistic environment as an ability like turning off a switch to be pluralistic and provide practical care instead of spiritual care (Dyer, 2021, p. 95). A chaplain must be able to function in a pluralistic environment to fulfill their role and mission as Air Force chaplains to serve all Airmen.

Chaplains who could not reconcile tensions between faith and job were determined, by the participants in the study, as not a good fit to serve as an Air Force chaplain (Dyer, 2021). Chaplains emphasized that finding this balance did not mean compromising one's religion (Dyer, 2021). Although one chaplain called this method "turning off a switch," van Dierendonck & Nuijten's (2011) servant leadership's interpersonal acceptance, implementing emotional healing (Barbuto & Wheeler; Liden et al., 2008; Green et al., 2015; Spears, 2010), forming relationships (Ehrhart, 2004), and through responsible morality (Sendjaya et al., 2008) are other methods to assist chaplains in doing this. Some chaplains viewed being able to function in a pluralistic environment as part of being an Air Force chaplain; none of the chaplains in the study said they struggled to perform duties in a pluralistic environment.

Being able to fulfill one's responsibilities to provide care to all Airmen in a pluralist setting is tied to each chaplain's characteristics and how they define the role of an Air Force chaplain. Characteristics that influence how chaplains carry out their roles are accountability, beliefs, cultures, faith, honesty, integrity, motivation, personality, upbringing, and values (Dyer, 2021, pp. 92-93). Character was also tied to whether a chaplain got caught up in the competition for promotion. Chaplains shared:

Participant 4 stated, "In the rush to get promoted, I have seen many chaplains, reserve, guard, and active duty, sacrifice their principles."

Participant 7 stated, "I think the uniqueness is that we're called to shepherd people and take care of them and holistically help them grow into better, stronger, faster people. And yet, we destroy people on our staff so we can get promoted."

During the discussion about standards of behavior and characteristics, participants in the study concluded that chaplains should adhere to high standards of behavior and exhibit characteristics such as accountability, beliefs, cultures, faith, honesty, integrity, motivation, personality, and upbringing. Based on their experience as chaplains and witnessing other chaplains sacrifice their principles to receive a promotion, chaplains'

character was determined to play an essential role in how they carried out their duties. Participants stated that characteristics and values influenced how they carried out their roles as Air Force chaplains.

Participants stated that officership was defined as fulfilling the expectations of Air Force chaplains and that civilian ministers and Air Force chaplains (officers) have different goals and roles (Dyer, 2021). Additionally, they revealed that if a chaplain had good officership, whether a chaplain fulfilled their ministerial obligations and represented God was irrelevant to them receiving a promotion. Good officership played a more critical role in promotion (Dyer, 2021).

As illustrated in *Table 2*, several resources exist to help chaplains overcome the False Narrative, eliminate the Great Divide, encourage a servant leadership culture, identify and nurture character strengths and help eliminate character weaknesses, and identify individuals that may not be suited to serve as a chaplain in a pluralistic environment early on. Friedman’s (2014) Total Leadership program aligns with servant leadership and requires one to take time to look inward and reflect on their behaviors, beliefs, and core values (Green et al., 2015; Greenleaf, 2002; Liden et al., 2008). Implementing Friedman’s (2014) Total Leadership program offers an opportunity to meet the need for chaplains to balance their lives. Not only can it support the emergence of servant leadership and culture, but when accompanied by nurturing the *Nine Dimensions of Servant Leadership* (Liden et al., 2008) by addressing the whole person through proven methods that seek to teach individuals how to achieve four-way wins (Friedman, 2014), it can assist chaplains in reconnecting to core values and beliefs (Friedman, 2014). By implementing these programs, chaplains can embrace their ministerial roots while reflecting on why they became Air Force chaplains. They can also implement servant leadership, contributing to the emerging servant leadership culture and fulfilling their commitment to service before self, finding balance as ministers, Air Force chaplains, and Officers.

Table 2
Results & Recommendations

Results	Desired Outcome	Recommendations	Supporting Literature
False Narrative	Leadership aligns actions with the true state of chaplain promotions	Evaluate current Chaplain Corps culture and set goals to dispel False Narrative myth; Implement Total Leadership and Five Dysfunctions of a Team	Culture Audit by OCAI (OCAI, 2019) Total Leadership (Friedman, 2014) Overcoming the Five Dysfunctions of a Team (Lencioni, 2005)
The Great Divide: Two major definitions & understandings of Air Force	Unified understanding of the role and definition of the Air Force chaplain	Regular conversations on understanding the role definition of the Air Force chaplain	DAFI52-101(The Secretary of the Air Force, 2019) DAFI 52-201 (2021)

**chaplain:
Minister
following your
religion or AFI
defined**

Emerging Servant Leadership Culture: Leadership Influences Followers	Align leadership behaviors with values and beliefs; model desired behaviors; rebuild trust among leaders and followers	Implement Total Leadership program and Overcoming the Five Dysfunctions of a Team. Encourage Servant Leadership, growth & development Complete Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire: MLQ II 360 Leader's Report with Authentic Leadership Styles & Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire: Group Report: MLQ II 360	Greenleaf (2002) MindGarden (2019) Overcoming the Five Dysfunctions of a Team (Lencioni, 2005) Total Leadership (Friedman, 2014)
Characteristics Matter	Identify weaknesses and strengths	Character testing DISC Profile: Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire: Group Report: MLQ II 360 Suite; Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire: MLQ II 360 Leader's Report with Authentic Leadership Styles	www.discprofile.com www.mindgarden.com
Pluralism	Chaplains who can reconcile tensions between faith and job remain; chaplains who are not a good fit leave or let go.	Total Leadership (Friedman, 2014)	Total Leadership (Friedman, 2014)

Source: Author's illustration, 2024, adapted from *Air Force chaplains balancing the scales: The dichotomy between service before self and self before service*, by Dyer, 2021, p. 127. (Publication No. 28775633) ProQuest Dissertations and Thesis Global. Copyright 2021 by Dyer.

Air Force chaplain leaders are in a position to impact followers. By being self-aware of their leadership style and limitations, chaplain leaders can develop skills to become

servant leaders because self-awareness increases leadership effectiveness (Clarr et al., 2014). Best servant leadership practices may also address the chaplains' concerns in this study.

Right identity- Seeing oneself as a servant

Right motivation- Serving God by serving others

Right method- Relating to others in a positive manner

Right impact- Inspiring others to serve a higher purpose

Right character- Maintaining integrity and authenticity (Wong & Davey, 2007, pp. 7-8).

Being an Air Force chaplain is riddled with complexities and seeming contradictions. Chaplains believe they must adhere to higher standards of behavior. They have a strong sense of responsibility towards those they serve and to the larger purpose of the Chaplain Corps' mission and their greater mission as ministers, which is in line with servant leadership. While there is room to grow and expand our understanding of these roles, chaplains continue to serve selflessly, and civilian ministers continue to answer the call to become Air Force chaplains. Those who answer the call to fill the role of an Air Force chaplain respond to the calling with a servant leader's heart, a commitment to serving Airmen, and a desire to balance service and self.

Limitations

Several limitations were identified in this study, and attempts were made to mitigate those limitations. These limitations include potential researcher biases, sample size of the study, the availability of the chaplains, and time. Researcher biases included observations, personal opinions, and thoughts that had formed from working with Air Force chaplains for over fifteen years. At one point, the researcher had worked with each of the participants.

Another possible limitation was that sessions were conducted via Zoom as participants were stationed at different bases across the United States. Meeting via Zoom could have been a limitation because it took more work to observe and take field notes on body language. An in-person study may have provided more data. Not getting to meet face-to-face or being able to observe where participants sat, to whom they sat next, and who they interacted with before and after the meetings could have been a limitation because these observations could have provided additional insights.

Due to the chaplain participants being in various time zones and holding various positions, there were times when a chaplain was unavailable to meet with the group as planned due to military commitments. To reduce this impact on the study, they would contact the researcher to go over what took place during the meeting, what was agreed upon during the meeting, and what the agreed-upon task was to implement during the month. At this time, they shared their thoughts, opinions, and experiences in one-on-one personal conversations. This helped chaplains fully engage in the study, providing significant insights as they carried out the agreed-upon tasks, maintained reflection journals, and participated in conversations about what they experienced as chaplains and when they carried out the agreed-upon tasks.

A reflection journal maintained throughout the study lessened researcher biases. Bracketing was implemented to identify and reduce observer biases and mitigate

threats to validity. This was coupled with intentionally avoiding only collecting and interpreting data supporting the researchers' existing beliefs (Roulston & Shelton, 2015). Reflexivity was critical because the researcher had worked with each participant at different times throughout their careers. A benefit of their previous interactions was that trust was already established, creating a safe space for honest discussions.

Seven individuals from different faith backgrounds, ranks, time in service, cultures, and genders participated in the study. However, a more extensive group study could have produced or substantiated the insights identified. Sample size could be a limitation except for the range of ranks, positions, time in service, and faith group backgrounds of the participants in the study. Purposeful sampling was implemented to select those most likely to provide insights that revealed the most significant and relevant data on the topic of the study (Abrams, 2010; Yin, 2011).

Time was a limitation. Although the total research study was limited to four months, participants uncovered substantial findings and insights during this action research study. A more extended study could reveal even more significant findings.

Conclusion

In this study servant leadership was not identified as a favored form of leadership among chaplains. This contradicts an earlier study that said servant leadership implementation was the fifth most important factor in Wing Chaplain leadership (Welch, R. as cited in Coston, 2009). Further study could clarify how leadership says servant leadership implementation is the fifth most important factor to Wing Chaplain leadership. Still, junior chaplains say leadership perpetuates the False Narrative, pushing chaplains to be more competitive to receive a promotion. Can servant leadership help them navigate the complexities of the Air Force promotion culture?

In an environment that no longer supports the existence of false narratives, there is room to explore why this belief continues to be perpetuated and how to eliminate it. Further research is needed on leaders' roles in perpetuating the False Narrative and the impact of continuing to implement it. How does this impact the emerging servant leadership culture? How do Air Force chaplains define servant leadership in a military setting? Can servant leadership address issues such as the False Narrative? Although the Air Force is taking leadership seriously and removing leaders who are falling short, they may unknowingly contribute to the False Narrative by allowing these former leaders to continue to serve in the Air Force. What is the impact of allowing chaplain leadership that is removed from a leadership position but allowed to continue to serve in the Air Force, such as former deputy chief of chaplains Brig. Gen. James Brantingham, have on the emerging servant leadership culture, the False Narrative, and trust in leadership from Junior chaplains (Novelly, 2023)? Does the False Narrative exist across all military chaplaincies? Does the False Narrative exist in other hierarchical organizations? If so, does it have the same impact on employees?

The Great Divide needs further exploration due to the significance of how a chaplain understands and defines their role as an Air Force chaplain impacts how they carry out their mission and serve Airmen. Air Force chaplains are hired for their faith backgrounds but are required to serve all Airmen regardless of the Airmen's faith background. Additionally, chaplains offer leadership guidance. It is necessary to

explore the influence of how a chaplain defines and understands what it means to be an Air Force chaplain on the guidance they offer leadership.

This study shows that there may be differences between civilian ministers and Air Force chaplains. Further research on these differences may provide insights to assist civilian ministers entering the world of being an Air Force chaplain. The differences between civilian ministers and Air Force chaplains may also contribute to a more expanded definition and understanding of the Great Divide.

The findings from this study, particularly the findings on the need for chaplains to spend time reflecting on what they are experiencing and why they became a chaplain in the first place, may be a need that exists with all chaplains or ministers, both military and civilian. The need to pause and reflect may also be beneficial for individuals in similar caregiving roles, such as counselors, clinicians, or psychologists. Additionally, experience or learning by doing may also be a finding that is transferable and not limited to individuals in ministry roles.

References

- Abrams, L. S. (2010). Sampling 'hard to reach' populations in qualitative research: The case of incarcerated youth. *Qualitative Social Work*, 9(4), 536–550.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325010367821>
- Air Force Personnel Center Public Affairs. (2023, July 12). Air Force releases latest field grade officer promotions. *Air Force's Personnel Center*. <https://www.afpc.af.mil/News/Article/3455752/air-force-releases-latest-field-grade-officer-promotions/>
- Ali, A. J. (2009). Islamic perspectives on leadership: A model. *International Journal of Islamic and Middle Eastern Finance and Management*, 2(2), 160–180. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17538390910965167>
- Allen, J. (2016, January 7). What's on Pope Francis' plate for the first part of 2016? *Crux Now*. <https://cruxnow.com/church/2016/01/whats-on-pope-francis-plate-for-the-first-part-of-2016/>
- Barbuto, J. E., & Wheeler, D. W. (2006). Scale development and construct clarification of servant leadership. *Group & Organization Management*, 31(3), 300–326. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601106287091>
- Barkhurst, C. (2021, September 17). Now more than ever, we need servant leaders. *Wright-Patterson AFB*. <https://www.wpafb.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/2777203/now-more-than-ever-we-need-servant-leaders/>

- Berry, T. B. (2015, June). Servant-leadership as an institutionalized model in Air Force education. *Journal of Education and Human Development*, 4(2), 123–129. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15640/jehd.v4n2a14>
- Blanchard, K., & Broadwell, R. (2018). *Servant leadership in action: How you can achieve great relationships and results*. Berrett-Koehler, Inc., A BK Business Book.
- Bowden, R. (2019, February 25). Global power, lethality, and servant leadership: Air Force chief of staff addresses Airmen, cadets at Air Force Academy. *United States Air Force Academy*. <https://www.usafa.edu/global-power-lethality-and-servant-leadership-air-force-chief-of-staff-addresses-airmen-cadets-at-air-force-academy/>
- Bowie, N. E. (2000). A Kantian theory of leadership. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, 21(4), 185–193. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01437730010335427>
- Butler, D. M., & Herman, R. D. (1999). Effective ministerial leadership. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 9(3), 229–239. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nml.9302>
- Carter, D., & Baghurst, T. (2013). The influence of servant leadership on restaurant employee engagement. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 124(3), 453–464. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-013-1882-0>
- Coghlan, D., & Brannick, T. (2014). *Doing action research in your own organization* (4th ed.). SAGE.
- Costin, D. (2009). *A leadership competency model for U.S. Air Force Wing Chaplains*. Defense Technical Information Center. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA540058.pdf>
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. SAGE.
- Davis, T. (2011, June 27). Good leaders practice servant leadership. *Air Force News*. <http://www.af.mil/News/Commentaries/Display/Article/141438/good-leaders-practice-servant-leadership/>
- DISC Profile. (2019). *DISC Profile*. www.discprofile.com
- Dyer, L. L. (2021). *Air Force chaplains balancing the scales: The dichotomy between service before self and self before service* (Publication No. 28775633) [Doctoral dissertation, The Chicago School of Professional Psychology]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

- Earnhardt, M. P. (2008). Testing a servant leadership theory among United States military members. *Emerging Leadership Journeys*, 1(2), 14-24.
https://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/elj/vol1iss2/ELJ_V1Is2_Earnhardt.pdf
- Ehrhart, M. G. (2004). Leadership and procedural justice climate as antecedents of unit-level organizational citizenship behavior. *Personnel Psychology*, 57(1), 61-94. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2004.tb02484.x>¹
- Eikeland, O. (2007). From epistemology to gnoseology-understanding claims of action research. *Management Research News*, 30(5), 344–358. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01409170710746346>
- Estocin, A. (2017, May 17). What makes an Orthodox Christian leader? *Orthodox Christian Network*. <http://myocn.net/what-makes-an-orthodox-christian-leader/>
- Eva, N., Robin, M., Sendjaya, S., van Dierendonck, D., & Liden, R. C. (2019). Servant leadership: A systematic review and call for future research. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 30(1), 111-132. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2018.07.004>
- Fischer, R. (2020, June 11). Colonel practices excellence through servant leadership. *Air Force Materiel Command*. <https://www.afmc.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/2217135/colonel-practices-excellence-through-servant-leadership/>
- Flick, U. (2018). Triangulation. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed., pp. 444–462). Sage Publications.
- Friedman, S. D. (2014). *Total leadership: Be a better leader, have a richer life*. Harvard Business Review Press.
- Green, M. T., Rodriguez, R. A., Wheeler, C. A., & Baggerly-Hinojosa, B. (2015, August). Servant leadership: A quantitative review of instruments and related results. *Servant Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 2(2), 76-96. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/995c/0f757f00d3f299708687f8a586d0ed79a3b5.pdf>
- Greenleaf, R. K. (2002). *Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power & greatness* (25th Anniversary Edition). Paulist Press.
- Hadley, G. (2024, June 3). Airmen faced less competition for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel in 2024. *Air & Space Forces Magazine*. <https://www.airandspaceforces.com/airmen-promotion-lieutenant-colonel-2024/>

Harper, D. (n.d.). Minister. *Online Etymology*

Dictionary. https://www.etymonline.com/word/minister#etymonline_v_16202

Heron, J. (1996). *Co-operative inquiry: Research into the human condition*. Sage.

Lehrfeld, J. (2023, February 6). Air Force's number two chaplain removed for "leadership

shortfalls." *Air Force Times*. <https://www.airforcetimes.com/news/your-air->

[force/2023/02/06/air-forces-number-two-chaplain-removed-for-leadership-shortfalls](https://www.airforcetimes.com/news/your-air-force/2023/02/06/air-forces-number-two-chaplain-removed-for-leadership-shortfalls)

Lencioni, P. (2005). *Overcoming the five dysfunctions of a team: A field guide for leaders, managers, and facilitators*. Jossey-Bass.

Liden, R. C., Wayne, S. J., Zhao, H., & Henderson, D. (2008). Servant leadership: Development of a multidimensional measure and multi-level assessment. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 19(2), 161–177. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2008.01.006>

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage Publications.

Losey, S. (2020, February 6). Four hundred sixty-eight officers selected for major and colonel, 145 enlisted for supplemental promotion. *Air Force*

Times. <https://www.airforcetimes.com/news/your-air-force/2020/02/06/468-officers-selected->

[for-major-and-colonel-145-enlisted-for-supplemental-promotion/](https://www.airforcetimes.com/news/your-air-force/2020/02/06/468-officers-selected-for-major-and-colonel-145-enlisted-for-supplemental-promotion/)

McFarland, K. P., & Stansell, J. C. (1993). *Historical perspectives on teacher research*. In D. J.

Flinders & G. E. Mills (Eds.), *Theory and concepts in qualitative research: Perspectives from the field* (pp. 113-127). Teachers College Press.

Military One Source. (2019). *Military One Source*. <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/>

Millsaps, J. W. (1983). Military retirement: Dream or dilemma for Air Force chaplains. *Defense*

Technical Information Center. <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a128377.pdf>

Mind Garden Inc. (2019). *Mind Garden*. <https://www.mindgarden.com/>

Mittal, R., & Dorfman, P. W. (2012). Servant leadership across cultures. *Journal of World Business*, 47(4), 555-570. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2012.01.009>

Neuman, W. L. (2011). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (7th ed.). Pearson.

Novelly, T. (2023, February 9). Air Force's Deputy Chief of Chaplains

fired. *Military.com*. <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2023/02/09/air-forces-deputy-chief-of-chaplains-fired.html>

- OCAI online. (2019). Assess organizational culture quickly, easily and reliably. <https://www.ocai-online.com/>
- Padgett, D. (2017). *Qualitative methods in social work research* (3rd ed.). SAGE.
- Patterson, K. (2003). Servant leadership: A theoretical model. https://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/sl_proceedings/2003/patterson_servant_leadership.pdf
- Pawlyk, O. (2019, May 31). Air Force surveys officers on major changes to promotion process. *Military.com*. <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2019/05/31/air-force-surveys-officers-major-changes-promotion-process.html>
- Piellusch, M. (2017, August 25). Toxic leadership or tough love: Does the U.S. military know the difference? *War Room*. <https://warroom.armywarcollege.edu/articles/toxic-leadership-tough-love-u-s-military-know-difference/>
- Reinke, S. J. (2004). Service before self: Towards a theory of servant-leadership. *Global Virtue Ethics Review*, 5(3), 30-57. <https://spaef.org/article/624/Service-Before-Self-Towards-a-Theory-of-Servant-Leadership>
- Rocca, F. X. (2013, June 6). Pope Francis calls careerism a “leprosy” on the priesthood. *Catholic News Service*. <https://www.catholicnews.com/services/englishnews/2013/pope-francis-calls-careerism-a-leprosy-on-the-priesthood.cfm>
- Rostker, B. D., Thie, H. J., Lacy, J. L., Kawata, J. H., & Purnell, S. W. (1993). The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980: A retrospective assessment. *RAND Corporation*. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/reports/R4246.html>
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Sage.
- Saleen, N., Brown, A., Smith, J., & Johnson, L. (2020). Practices to foster physician presence and connection with patients in clinical encounters. *Journal of Patient Experience*, 7(2), 123-130. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1234567890123456>
- Sampayo, J., & Maranga, K. (2019). The servant-leader model: Air Force lawyers. *Journal of Management Policy and Practice*, 20(2), 93-99. <https://doi.org/10.33423/jmpp.v20i2.2096>
- Schaubroeck, J., Lam, S. S. K., & Peng, A. C. (2011). Cognition-based and affect-based trust as mediators of leader behavior influences on team performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96(4), 863-871. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0022625>

- Schirmer, P., Thie, H. J., Harrell, M. C., & Tseng, M. S. (2006). Challenging time in DOPMA: Flexible and contemporary military officer management. *RAND Corporation*.
<https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG451.html>
- The Secretary of the Air Force. (2015). *Air Force Materiel Command Supplement*. https://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/afmc/publication/afi36-2501_afmcsup/afi36-2501_afmcsup.pdf
- The Secretary of the Air Force. (2019). *Air Force Instruction 52-101*. <https://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/afmc/publication/afi52-101/afi52-101.pdf>
- The Secretary of the Air Force. (2021). *Air Force Instruction*. <https://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/afmc/publication/dafi52-201/dafi52-201.pdf>
- Sendjaya, S., Sarros, J. C., & Santora, J. C. (2008). Defining and measuring servant leadership behavior in organizations. *Journal of Management Studies*, 45(2), 402-424.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2007.00761.x>
- Shane III, L. (2018, July 25). Congress is giving the officer promotion system a massive overhaul. *Military Times*. <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2018/07/25/how-officers-are-promoted-will-get-its-biggest-overhaul-in-decades-heres-what-that-means-for-the-military/>
- Smith, S. (2019, July 17). Military commissioned officer promotions. *The Balance Careers*.
<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/military-commissioned-officer-promotions-4055887>
- Spears, L. C. (2010). Character and servant leadership: Ten characteristics of effective, caring leaders. https://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/jvl/vol1_iss1/Spears_Final.pdf
- U.S. Air Force. (2019). Vision: It's our promise to protect. <https://www.airforce.com/mission/vision>
- van Dierendonck, D. (2010). Servant leadership: A review and synthesis. *Journal of Management*, 37(4), 1228-1261. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206310380462>
- van Dierendonck, D., & Nuijten, I. (2011). The servant leadership survey: Development and validation of a multidimensional measure. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 26(3), 249-267. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10869-010-9194-1>
- van Dierendonck, D., & Patterson, K. (2010). *Servant leadership: Developments in theory and research*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Vinkenburg, C. J., van Engen, M. L., Eagly, A. H., & Johannesen-Schmidt, M. C. (2011). An exploration of stereotypical beliefs about leadership styles: Is transformational leadership a route to

women's promotion? *The Leadership Quarterly*, 22(1), 10-21.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2010.12.003>

Washington. (2019). Department of the Air Force. [https://static.e-](https://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/af_a1/publication/afi36-2406/afi36-2406.pdf)

[publishing.af.mil/production/1/af_a1/publication/afi36-2406/afi36-2406.pdf](https://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/af_a1/publication/afi36-2406/afi36-2406.pdf)

Wong, P., & Davey, D. (2007). Best practices in servant leadership. [http://www.drpaulwong.com/wp-](http://www.drpaulwong.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/wong-davey-2007-best-practices-in-servant-leadership.pdf)

[content/uploads/2013/09/wong-davey-2007-best-practices-in-servant-leadership.pdf](http://www.drpaulwong.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/wong-davey-2007-best-practices-in-servant-leadership.pdf)

Yin, R. K. (2011). *Qualitative research from start to finish*. NY: The Guilford Press.

Yukl, G. (2013). *Leadership in organizations* (8th ed.). Pearson.

About the author



Dr. Lorrie Lane Dyer is a MLD and MBA adjunct instructor at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College. Dr. Dyer earned her Doctor of Philosophy in Organizational Leadership in 2022 from The Chicago School of Professional Psychology where she completed her scholarly research on how Air Force chaplains balance service and self. Her research was inspired by her work with Air Force chaplains as the Catholic Religious Education and Parish Coordinators for Altus Air Force Base Chapel for over 14 years. She earned her Master's in Leadership Development from Saint Mary-of-the Woods College in 2018.

Dr. Dyer has facilitated faith formation classes for the University of Dayton's VLCFF program and Catechetical Methodologies certification for the Archdiocese for the Military Services (AMS) since 2013. She serves as an AMS consultant for the National Community of Catechetical Leaders.

Dr. Dyer is a lifetime learner and enjoys helping students reach their academic and professional goals.

Acknowledgments: Thank you, Air Force chaplain research participants, for participating and trusting me with your experiences, knowledge and insights. I appreciate Dr. Leahy, for encouraging and helping me grow as a person, a student, and a researcher. Thank you, Dr. Jennie Mitchell and Dr. Kim LaComba, for your guidance and support.

GLI classification: (89)

Paper type: Research article

Received: (7/27/2024) **Accepted:** (8/27/2024)



Getting On Board or Going Overboard: A Case Study on Gender Inequality's Impact on the Shipping Industry

Robert Williford

Saint Mary-of-the Woods College, Indiana (USA)

Elisabetta Vitolini-Mroski,

Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, Indiana (USA)

Aikaterini Sfyroera

University of West Attica (Athens, Greece)

Filippos - Eleftherios Priniotakis

University of West Attica (Athens, Greece)

Abstract

Background: This case study explores gender inequality in the shipping industry through the story of the protagonist, Maria Bahar, a young woman facing potential discrimination at her job. Students will analyze the situation, consider various responses, and recommend solutions. Through discussion questions, student participants will develop critical thinking and decision-making skills for navigating complex workplace dynamics in a globalized socioeconomic context. Students to weigh evidence, justify their approaches, and grapple with the complexities of navigating potentially unfair situations. **Objectives:** The goal is to consider the best path forward for the protagonist, and to understand the factors presented in the case study that are impacting said experiences. **Learning Outcomes:** Students will be able to address complex ethical situations, utilize the available resources to make decisions, and engage in collaborative problem-solving to address gender inequality. **Use:** For instructional purposes with students in business management, supply chain, shipping, human resources, women and gender studies, or similar courses/fields. Global applications of this case study should be considered, especially for teams that include people from multiple cultures, identities, and beliefs. **Teaching Notes:** Teaching materials available upon request.

Keywords: Gender Inequality, Ethical Leadership, Social Change Theory, Discrimination in the Workplace, Shipping Industry.

Paper type: Case Study

Citation: Williford, R., Vitolini-Mroski, E., Aikaterini, S., Flippos-Eleftherios, P. (2025) Getting on board: A case study on gender inequality's impact on the shipping industry. *Αρετή (Arete) Journal of Excellence in Global Leadership*, 3(1). 162-174. DOI 10.59319/arete.v3i1.900.

Case Description

Fleeing war-torn Aleppo, Syria, Maria Bahar seeks a new beginning in Piraeus, Greece, landing a job at Ocean Blue, a shipping company in one of the world's largest ports. But Ocean Blue is roiled by deep-seated economic and social issues, forcing Maria to navigate a series of challenges as she fights for her rights, her livelihood, and potentially a chance to change the culture of the shipping industry altogether.

Case Synopsis

Maria Bahar, a young refugee woman new to a shipping company in Piraeus, Greece, faces a potential case of gender inequality. This case study delves into her situation, encouraging students to analyze the complexities of workplace dynamics in a globalized and socioeconomic context. Through thought-provoking discussion questions, students will explore various responses and recommend solutions to address potential gender discrimination in the workplace. The case fosters critical thinking and decision-making skills, as students learn to justify their reasoning and navigate the intricacies of potentially unfair situations.

Background & Case Story

Ocean Blue

In one of the largest ports in the world, Piraeus, home of hundreds of shipping companies competing with each other in a highly competitive environment, there exists one small shipping company named Ocean Blue. Ocean Blue is known for staying competitive with peers by transporting bulk cargo to small islands and other ships that their larger peers were not capable of transporting. Although it was a small company, Ocean Blue had managed to have a near monopoly on the carriage of cargo in the areas in which it operated, making it a highly profitable team with room still to grow. A large part of that success was thanks to Mr. Nicholas Alexiou, the Manager of Ocean Blue, who has spent the last 20 years at the helm, carving out as many profitable avenues as he could.

The Captain, a Leading Figure of Ocean Blue

The most important role in the company was played by the ship's retired captain named Michalis Messologlou (known by members of the company as "the Captain"), whose role included deciding on key issues of ship operations. These operations included the renewal of ship certificates, registrations, inspections, and daily procedures, announcements of departure and arrival of ships, and so on. This role was vital to the overall success of the company's day-to-day approach, of which the Captain's supervisor, Mr. Alexiou, would remind him frequently. Ocean Blue's success, after all, would not be nearly as abundant without the Captain's work.

A Troubled Past and a Prosperous Future

Maria's upbringing was not always an easy one. The young woman originates from the city of Aleppo, in northern Syria. Despite historically being a major economic and cultural center, due to the ongoing dangerous conflict, the city has suffered significant damage and displacement of its population. Many of the helpless inhabitants have found refuge in Greece, including Maria, who was the only member of her family that

managed to escape the war. She initially found temporary accommodation in a refugee camp in Chios, Greece, where she stayed for six months and then moved to Athens to seek job opportunities. Maria was an award-winning scholar at the University of Damascus, with a major in Business Administration and a minor in Shipping and Transportation. Her high qualification status gave her a considerable advantage in career opportunities but she was also aware of the shipping culture and the discrimination that female workers received. There was no option of looking back.

Maria Bahar came to Greece seeking refuge. Though the unemployment rate is high, Maria knew landing a job could provide a safe and stable life for her and any future family members. She began working with a refugee center to get settled and provide stability in her life. While there was typically very little luck in landing a long-term job in Greece these days, Maria had no other option but to wait and see. After about nine months, the refugee center was able to place her with Ocean Blue in a role that was initially temporary but quickly became a more permanent role if Maria proved to be an asset to the team. Her willingness to learn and eagerness to do well resulted in Maria's quick success with the company, and Michalis, the Captain, took notice. As she would be assigned tasks, she would complete them before their deadline and would deliver them to perfection. Oftentimes, she would go above and beyond by helping others learn to maximize team productivity. After three years, Maria began shadowing Michalis to get a better understanding of his role, responsibilities, and the overall operations of the organization. The Captain was impressed with Maria's development as a team member and developed a cohesive, productive working relationship with her. He began to think of her as his right-hand person and trusted her completely with the job duties she took on. Maria felt deep gratitude for what she was learning next to him, respecting him and seeing him as her mentor.

However, the Captain came down with an illness that sidelined him sporadically, leaving Maria to complete his tasks on the days he was not in his office due to his health. Knowing what his health situation was like she felt an obligation to help him as much as she could and not let him down under any circumstances.

Although she was relatively new to the Captain's responsibilities, Maria focused all her attention on carrying out all the Captain's job tasks, some of which included the renewal of certificates for the ships, daily itinerary and routes, cargo handling arrangements for loading and discharging of vessels, port activities, and so on. She felt that she had a large part of the responsibility to carry out the procedures that would make the company run smoothly. More specifically, those responsibilities encompassed the shipping routes to be as planned and arrivals at the ports to be on time even if it meant that she had to work long hours each day, rising early and leaving well after everyone else. Most notably, Maria proposed new management objectives and implemented the company's first comprehensive work plan. This plan aimed to enhance employee productivity and streamline operations by establishing improved work procedures and redesigning tasks. She was able to show the company's leadership that she was thinking about the long-term strategic plan and success of the company.

"You're doing such a great job filling in and completing my tasks," the Captain said energetically. "I feel like you're ready for whatever comes your way."

Maria had to find a way to continue excelling in the role to avoid further harm and displacement.

The Fall of Ocean Blue

A crippling economic downturn had gripped the company for the past five years, escalating in the last two years to sow chaos and disrupt every aspect of its operations. Employees and administrators alike grew increasingly worried. This decline was mainly due to the significant economic crisis that had a heavy effect on the majority of Greek firms. At the same time, the highly competitive environment which introduced fierce competition from international rivals with rock-bottom prices compounded the crisis, while the lax regulations and public policies further exacerbated Ocean Blue's position in the industry. After a while, Mr. Alexiou reached an impasse. His initial approach of handling this difficult situation gave way to widespread anxiety and lackluster decision-making.

To make matters worse, Mr. Alexiou did not believe that the professional development of employees at Ocean Blue was a main priority. Simply being able to financially get by with each passing year was all he could focus on. This led to a callousness to his leadership approach, oftentimes becoming non-communicative and strategically bereft. He began to lack the initiative to develop a team culture that allowed members to grow beyond their current roles and repeatedly avoided taking risks, being afraid of further worsening the company's financial situation. Many employees began to grow restless and stagnant at a company that was on the brink of downsizing. If they were not careful, this could prove to be of significant detriment to Ocean Blue's future.

Looming inspections threatened the firm's future and reputation, a dark cloud amplified by the captain's absence due. This left the crew feeling desperate, especially for Mr. Alexiou, whose worry gnawed at him the most.

The Phone Altercation

Although not fully recovered from the illness, the Captain felt it was necessary to communicate his physical condition so that Ocean Blue does not suffer in the long-term. He decided to make some calls.

"There are some things that can't wait," said the Captain as he picked up the phone and cleared his throat. "Plans must be made." He dialed the first person who needed to know.

The silence was heavy before a familiar voice broke it. "Captain! What a nice surprise!" said the voice.

"Michalis, sir.. It's great hearing from you," said the Captain with a bit of unease. "How are you doing?"

"I'm just fine... Captain, you don't sound very good..." said Mr. Alexiou.

"I am still recovering, but there are serious matters that cannot be postponed," said the Captain.

"You're talking about the inspection of course. Right, right, that's a good point," said Mr. Alexiou, now both sharing the worry.

"I am." said the Captain determined. "I will return to the ship and be present while the inspections are taking place. You have my word..."

"That is brilliant. I am very pleased to hear that, Captain," said Mr. Alexiou, showing his excitement.

"There is one thing though," said the Captain regarding the sensitive turn this discussion was about to take. "You know I am not getting any younger. And you also have seen how the tables can turn and how dangerous it is for the company to not have a person responsible for the tasks I've taken."

"We've talked about this. It's out of the question," said Mr. Alexiou, with a serious tone, interrupting the captain once again.

"Mr. Alexiou, I am aware of your concerns but there is no other way," said the Captain, equally setting the tone of his voice. "It is simple. I will retire soon. We have interviewed multiple candidates, and no one matched our expectations. It will take us much time and many resources to train one and the possibilities of the result being the one we seek are still low. I know Maria. I've worked with her on multiple occasions. I've seen her capabilities and I'm aware of the areas she still has time to grow in."

The Captain suddenly coughed and tried to rearrange his thoughts. "... and I know that this woman and her passion is what the company needs. Maria can make this company prosper," said the Captain, convinced his speech was solid enough to make an argument in Mr. Alexiou's eyes.

"Captain..." said Mr. Alexiou. It was evident that the Captain felt uneasy.

"I respect your opinion and your courage to express your feelings," said Mr. Alexiou.

"These were not feelings, Mr. Alexiou. These are the facts," said the Captain, preparing himself for what was coming.

"And the answer is 100% no!" yelled Mr. Alexiou, anger rising in his voice. "You must truly ignore the culture behind shipping. You are clearly not taking into consideration what will happen if I..." said Mr. Alexiou, pausing to assert his dominance. "... take this decision. It will be the end of this company. There will be no hierarchy, no obedience! The workers would never accept a—"

Mr. Alexiou knew this conversation was going to happen eventually and he had been prepared. But his frustration couldn't hold his words back.

"A, uh.. A woman! There is no chance! Even the inspectors wouldn't take her seriously. They would laugh at us and that would be the end of Ocean Blue as we know it. Aren't you even aware of the catastrophe that follows your proposition?" said Mr. Alexiou, now realizing that he has gone too far.

Mr. Alexiou takes a deep breath, calms himself, and continues. The Captain is silent.

"What I am trying to say here, Captain, is that it will be disastrous for us and for Maria, to apply this strategy. I truly support women's rights! And I aspire to have your courage

to take a stand on the matter. But can we please consider the consequences?" said Mr. Alexiou, switching back to his diplomatic behavior. A short breath in and out as he tries to steady himself for the response.

After a few moments of pause, the Captain seems ready to speak.

"Mr. Alexiou..." said the Captain, expecting the manager's prior behavior. "There are no such consequences. Maria has already worked with at least 70% of the crew. They know her. And truly, they respect her. We, the crew..." said the Captain trying to seclude the manager and imply that there is no one sharing his thoughts. "... We respect her. We know that society hasn't given women the opportunity to take such jobs or be responsible for such heavy duties. But Maria really leaned into the opportunity! She shadowed me and tried to learn as much as she could. I was a bit skeptical in the beginning, but she is a great student. She copied the way that I work and even developed her own approach and style..."

The Captain tried to lighten the conversation, laughing at his own last words and leaving room for the manager to laugh too. There was dead silence coming from the other line.

"What I'm trying to say is that she took the risk and has shown us all that determination and passion are far more important than someone's gender when it comes to this work. Can't you be more... open-minded?" said the Captain with a charming tone.

"Open-minded?! Are you saying that to me, Captain?" said Mr. Alexiou. Words couldn't describe his frustration. His voice grew agitated.

"This conversation is over. The inspection is scheduled for tomorrow. I kindly ask you to attend. It is crucial for our company." said Mr. Alexiou.

The Captain took a breath and got interrupted before saying anything. "And don't you dare call Maria to the inspection, Captain! We will discuss this matter in person. Goodbye."

The phone abruptly hung up before the Captain had a chance to say goodbye. It was after the call ended that the Captain feared he may have pushed the manager too far. But was it far enough to make a difference in advocating for Maria? Or did it result in Mr. Alexiou being angered beyond change?

Word Travels Fast

As the inspection took place, the inspectors found glaring deficiencies existing with the ships. One ship had been characterized as unsafe for navigation, something that was sure to negatively impact the reputation (and bottom line) of the company.

Word travels fast. Maria was aware of the Manager's opinions about her as well as plans regarding her position. A week earlier, Thalia, a female worker, was fired for uncertain reasons. There were rumours among employees that Mr. Alexiou was unhappy and planned to continue firing female workers. As the weeks went by, Maria noticed that she was being cut off and her responsibilities were shrinking. She took it as a sign to reevaluate her role with the company. She calculated possible outcomes,

organized her thoughts, slept on them, and decided to arrange a meeting with the Manager in order to get things clear and make a final decision.

“Alexiou speaking. Who is this?” said the Manager, after picking up the phone.

“Hello Mr. Alexiou, this is Maria,” she said, with her voice shaking. She was trying not to let her nervousness shake her confidence.

“Oh...Maria. I am quite surprised. What can I do for you? Why are you calling” said Mr. Alexiou.

The Manager was surprised indeed. He had been careful not to give anyone the impression that they had the authority to call him personally.

“I would like to arrange a meeting with you, Mr. Alexiou. As soon as possible, if you have the time for it.” Maria said with a sense of sureness.

“A meeting... What do we have to meet about?” said the Manager, now fully aware of the situation.

“About my position in the company and my future plans,” said Maria with confidence.

“Oh... sure sure, this is a fair request. Come see me this Monday at 8 am sharp. Don't be late.” said Mr. Alexiou.

“Thank you, sir. See you then,” said Maria before hanging up the phone, breathing a sigh of relief.

Both shared the relief. But there was a growing unease about how things will go following the meeting.

Behind Closed Doors

It was a gloomy morning. Car horns filled the air, breaking the morning silence as people were venturing from their homes to work and school. Maria was deep in her thoughts, stuck in traffic a few streets away from Mr. Alexiou's office. She felt prepared for what was coming, fully aware that the Manager was ready too. She parked her car, took a deep breath, and rang the doorbell. “Hello?” said a crackling but familiar voice coming from the door phone.

“Good morning, it's Maria. I have an appointment with Mr. Alexiou,” she said as she tried to place the voice.

The door opened and Maria saw the face behind the voice. It was the Captain. She felt surprised and relieved. The friendly figure with a calming smile lightened her burden.

“Good morning, dear.” said the Captain with a smile.

“Good morning, Captain! I didn't know that you would be here,” said Maria.

“I am not supposed to. I have a very busy day, trying to solve several issues...” said the Captain, looking back at Mr. Alexiou's office door. “... that other people caused. I was just here to try to... pave the way for you, Maria. You deserve it. Do what you

believe, kid, but do not let people devalue you...for any reason” said the Captain, while heading out.

“Thank you, Captain... for everything,” said Maria, truly inspired and more determined than before.

Before knocking on the door, Maria overheard a heated phone conversation between the manager and what seemed to be the shipowner, Mr. Koras.

“Not this again. I don’t want anything more to hear from you Nicholas.” said the shipowner.

“I know Mr. Koras, I am very sorry to bother you again, sir. But the responsibilities lay heavy on my shoulders and I don’t want to make any rash decisions, sir,” said Mr. Alexiou, with growing anxiety clearly noticeable in his voice.

“Of course, they should lay heavy on your shoulders. You are the company’s manager—act like it.” said Mr. Koras.

“I know sir and I’m deeply sorry. But it’s all those inspections, the workforce complaining about their wages, the aggressive competition which is determined to make us fall apart, the captain’s retirement, and even the other issue... a female worker of ours who’s asking me if she can take over the Captain’s responsibilities,” said the manager, trying to find any comfort left in his superior’s words.

“Are you... You’ve got to be joking Mr. Alexiou! You have completely lost control. What are you even saying right now? I don’t want to hear all this. How have we been able to make a profit all these years? Do your job, there are no excuses! You’re supposed to be able to handle this on your own. Clean up this mess you created immediately!” said Mr. Koras, ending the phone call.

Maria was shocked but she decided to proceed with her plan. She took a deep breath as she focused on the closed door. Steadying herself, she knocked three times. “Mr. Alexiou, it’s Maria. I’m here for our meeting,” she said.

Five long seconds passed. Silence. Then, suddenly, “Get inside Maria,” said the voice behind the door. “Hurry.”

Maria opened the door and saw Mr. Alexiou sitting at his desk. He had a somber look on his face with dark circles under his eyes, revealing that he hadn’t had much sleep.

The silence was so loud; both Maria and Mr. Alexiou sat awkwardly.

“So... Maria,” said the Manager. “You’re here to talk about your position and the way that I mistreat you, is that right?”

Maria hadn’t expected that move. She thought that this would be a back-and-forth conversation where she would try to make a case that the Manager devalues her and he was going to deny it.

“That’s correct, Mr. Alexiou,” said Maria. “I appreciate the fact that you are being straightforward so that I will talk plainly.”

Hearing that, the Manager was impressed by her boldness. But a sudden thought crossed his mind: this is all an act. Maria is trying to convince him that she can get hold of any situation and assert her dominance when the time comes. He simply wouldn't stand for this.

"I am here because I am certain that I can take responsibilities beyond your expectations. I have shown great progress and my workflow is promising. Despite that, I am, day by day, getting tasks taken from me, while no one replaces them effectively, except the Captain when his health allows him to be present." said Maria determined.

"Listen Maria. You probably think that I am not aware of what is happening in this company. You may be thinking that I am delusional or that I do not support and appreciate you. Well, you are wrong!" yelled the Manager.

There was a sudden sorrow in his eyes. Maria had never seen the Manager in this situation. She was speechless.

"Maria, listen... Before coming to this company, I had the same exact beliefs. I know how difficult it is for women to prosper in their careers. I am aware that we should support these kinds of movements to solve the problem. But the thing is, Maria..."

The Manager continued. Maria was trying to understand if he was being sincere or if that was his game plan all along. She sat idle, attentively listening to every word.

"... I have analyzed the Greek shipping context. I've made numerous strategic plans based on my education, knowledge, and experiences that I have in this field. I have studied this, and I know that it is highly risky to make these seemingly brave decisions. A company in such a state should not ever take such risks! You are aware of the economic situation, right? We have a loyal agenda of customers and suppliers and there is a certain work culture that comes with it. There is a way things are getting done and neither me nor you can change them without risking everything we have built! Are you even aware of how dangerous it is to make even the slightest mistake and the long-term repercussions that come with it? You know how the inspection went. You want all of us to lose our jobs?" said Mr. Alexiou urgently- words spilled faster than he anticipated.

The Manager's tone was now increasingly unwavering. He was relentless. "We are not going to be brave and risk everything we've built to change the world! We cannot afford that. Why doesn't anyone understand that? You all made me the villain while the only thing I was doing was caring for this company!" said Mr. Alexiou.

Not knowing what to do with the silence, Mr. Alexiou adjusted the tone of his voice and kept going.

"Maria," said Mr. Alexiou turning his gaze towards the window, "another thing to consider is that the captain's responsibilities demand relentless focus. It's a full-time commitment, and frankly, some aspects require a level of... unpredictable hours that might conflict with establishing a strong work-life balance."

Maria was trying to detect the implications of the manager's words.

“The role you’re currently in is strategically positioned so that it allows for a bit more flexibility, that would be a better fit at this point of a young woman’s career.”

Maria was shocked. A whirlwind of emotions swept through her.

“Mr. Alexiou...?” said Maria. Tears were quickly forming in her eyes.

Maria looked at Mr. Alexiou and took a few steps back. She left speechless, the door wide open much like her emotional state, unsure of what’s next and afraid for her future.

Case Study Objectives

- Assessing the current state of gender equality in the Greek shipping industry, identify the key areas where gender inequality exists and highlight the advantages of gender equality.
- Demonstrate the benefits of advancing gender equality in terms of productivity and corporate reputation
- Understand the root causes of gender inequality
- Present strategies and best practices to achieve gender equality
- Inform companies and stakeholders about the potential impact of gender inequality and recommend solutions for improvement

These objectives provide a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing gender equality in the Greek shipping industry while directing exploration of the current challenges. They highlight the benefits of gender equality, and the actions needed to create an inclusive environment.

Case Study Questions

Some initial questions to be considered include:

- Discuss the key aspects of discrimination in the workplace that emerge in the case study.
- What are the implications for Maria if she decides to leave the company?
- What are the implications for Maria if she decides to stay with the company?
- How might the economic and social situations of Piraeus (Greece) and Aleppo (Syria) affect Maria’s decision?
- Discuss the ethical implications of the action(s) taken by Mr. Alexiou. What would be your response(s) to some of the comments that Mr. Alexiou made about Maria and the role of women in leadership positions?
- How would you define gender equality?
- Why is gender equality important? Students are invited to provide specific examples of how equality for women means progress for all (UN Sustainable Goal #5).
- How important are mentorship and training programs in fighting discrimination in the workplace?

Teaching Materials

All teaching materials can be found in the accompanying teaching notes document. If desired, please email Arete@smwc.edu.

References

- Dixon-Fyle, S., Dolan, K., Hunt, D. V., & Prince, S. (2020, May 19). *Diversity wins: How inclusion matters*. McKinsey & Company. <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters>
- Duke, S. (2017, November 2). *The key to closing the gender gap? Putting more women in charge*. World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/11/women-leaders-key-to-workplace-equality-closing-the-gender-gap/>
- International Maritime Organization. (n. d.). *Women in maritime*. <https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/TechnicalCooperation/Pages/WomenInMaritime.aspx>
- Kelan, E. (2020, December 21). *Why aren't we making more progress towards gender equity?* Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2020/12/why-arent-we-making-more-progress-towards-gender-equity>
- Papalexatou, C. & Matsaganis, M. (2022, November 11). *In focus – Equality between women and men in Greece and in the EU*. Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy. <https://www.eliamep.gr/en/publication/in-focus-η-ισότητα-γυναικών-και-ανδρών-στην-ε/>
- Wista International (n.d.). *IMO and WISTA international “women in maritime survey”*. <https://wistainternational.com/our-work/women-in-maritime-imo-wista-international-survey-2021/>
- World Economic Forum (2023, June 1). *Global gender gap report 2023*. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2023.pdf

About the Authors



Based out of Indianapolis, Indiana but originally from Flint, Michigan, Rob Williford is a student in the Global Leadership PhD program at Saint Mary-of-the Woods College. He serves as the Associate Dean of Judicial Affairs and Residence Life at the University of Indianapolis and is the Co-Founder of Brave The Cycle, an educational consulting and leadership development group. His research interests include men and masculinities, intercultural competence, and conflict resolution. In his free time, Rob likes to explore creative writing, collect old coins, and spend time with his partner Chloe and two cats, Calliope and Merry.



Elisabetta Vitolini-Mroski is a certified executive coach with a background that includes 20 years in senior finance roles in the United States and abroad. Her work focuses on accelerating personal and professional change through leadership coaching in organizations across the globe. Living and working in Italy and the United States inspired Elisabetta's study of global leadership in which she is currently pursuing a Ph.D. Elisabetta is the founder of CoachAgility, an executive coaching firm.

Acknowledgments:

Rob thanks the educators who encouraged him to be still long enough to see what questions bloom. He would like to thank Katerina, Philip, and Elisabetta for being great partners on the GAGE project, and to Dani, Michael, Franklin, and Chloe who all inspire his pursuit and love of learning.

Elisabetta would like to thank her mentors for their guidance and encouragement in this learning journey. She would also like to express her sincere gratitude to her GAGE program partners, Aikaterini, Philip, and Rob, whose knowledge and perspective were invaluable during this project. Thanks to Brad for his love and support and to Sofia and Lisa, your genuine curiosity is truly an inspiration.

About the Authors (continued)



Aikaterini Sfyroera is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Industrial Design and Production Engineering at the University of West Attica. Her research interests include autonomous Shipping, supply Chain - Logistics and New Technologies in Shipping. Professionally, she has been involved since 2017 in administrative and financial support for MSc programs of the University of West Attica and participated in various Erasmus+ research projects as a researcher, like "JOINclusion" a project addressing the social exclusion of children with a migrant background and "Circuitex" about Circular Economy. She has also contributed to the ESPA "ENIRISST" project, focusing on intelligent infrastructure for shipping, supply chain, transport, and logistics.



Filippos Eleftherios Priniotakis holds a Bachelor of Science in Economics and Regional Development and a Master of Science in Public Economics and Policy. His research focuses on the intersection of environmental and economic sustainability and economic and political inequality. Throughout his academic career, he has been actively engaged in scientific research, contributing to projects such as the Erasmus+ funded Sustainable Energy Centres Of Vocational Excellence (SECOVE). In this role, he conducts research, participates in the organisation and teaching of students and staff, and fosters a supportive environment for young women pursuing STEM careers. His recent paper "Combating Climate Change: An Evaluation of Municipal Plans in Greece's most Densely Populated Regional Unit"

represents the first comprehensive assessment of its kind in Greece.

Acknowledgments:

Aikaterini would like to express her deep gratitude to her GAGE project partners Elisabetta, Rob and Philip for their invaluable contributions and teamwork, to extend her gratitude to her professors who have been instrumental in her development and finally to thank her family for their unwavering support and guidance.

Filippos would like to express his deepest gratitude to his fellow colleagues and dear friends Elisabetta, Rob and Katerina for the great memories and stimulating discussions that pushed him to excel. He would also like to express his appreciation to his supervisors. Their invaluable support and insightful guidance were instrumental throughout the project. To his family, Giorgos, Dimitra, Natalie, Efraim- every aspect of his life is enriched by your unconditional love.

GLI classification: (70)

Paper type: Case Study

Received: (8/05/2024) **Accepted:** (10/08/2024)



Restorative Justice in Mexico: An Interconnected Approach for International Policy Alignment and Labor Redevelopment

Lisa S. Thatcher, M.L.D.

Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, USA

Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, Terre Haute, Indiana, USA

Abstract

Background: Beginning with foundational information about restorative justice, its benefits, and how it is used internationally, the poster then presents two pocket discussions for support of adoption. Conventionality control and the alignment of state-level policy change to come more in alignment with restorative justice-focused international policies highlights the progress that has been made. Historical context is given to labor/land reform, progress from leadership corruption to transparency, and union redevelopment so that progress may be again highlighted. Finally, justification is given as to how these leadership-driven changes align with local cultural identity. This is significant because of the lack of extant research that moves away from the theoretical discussions about the benefit of adopting restorative justice policies at the organizational development or governmental levels, instead offering readership an example of how implementation functionally works.

Keywords: International Policy, Leadership Transparency, Restorative Justice, Labor Reform, Cultural Identity, Worker's Rights

GLI classification: 75

Paper type: Poster

Received: June 10, 2024

Accepted: October 12, 2024

Citation: Thatcher, S. (2025) Restorative justice in Mexico: An interconnected approach for international policy and labor redevelopment. *Αρετή (Arete) Journal of Excellence in Global Leadership*, 3(1).175-179.

<https://doi.org/10.59319/arete.v3i1.891>.

Restorative Justice in Mexico: An Interconnected Approach for International Policy Alignment & Labor Redevelopment

Foundation: Restorative Justice

Tiempo Dinámico

- Restorative justice (RJ) is an alternative dispute resolution mechanism (ADM) that moves away from punitive measures and focuses on a culture of justice for victim support, offender reparation, and community healing.
- RJ is associated with positive victim outcomes, lower rates of recidivism, increased organizational transparency, and increased trust.

Globally-Differing Approaches

- Learning through the 17 UN criminal justice systems, RJ has only flourished in pockets of practice initiatives, active communities, and multiple indigenous communities.
- RJ is gaining popularity due, in part, to its alignment with bottom-line benefiting international business practices including competitiveness, humanistic care, change leadership, and global mindset development.

Alignment: International Policy Adoption

Conventionality Control: Analyzing National Actions Against International Standards

- In part of the larger reform movement starting in 2008, Mexico has moved towards RJ and ADM incorporation, and has contextualized this process into an 8-year long justice reform that concluded in 2014.
- To accomplish these goals, Mexico is adapting legislation to meet international standards such as aligning the Mexican National Human Rights Commission to meet the UN's Human Rights Committee in 2015, and the signing of the General Law on Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms in 2014. The law stipulates how ADM is processed through the country and is aimed at producing RJ results.
- Shared goals are to humanize the justice process, to align with international policies, and to increase leadership transparency.

Context & Connection: Labor Redevelopment

Foundations for Worker Justice, Labor Reformation, & Land Identity

- The 1910 Mexican Revolution grew out of the simultaneous development of land reform and labor organization due to the interconnectedness of the post-NAPTA major exports of agriculture products and oil – creating interconnectedness.
- In 1910 unions began consolidation under the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM) which was closely tied to the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) – both have suffered from corruption scandals decreasing the perception of trust.

Need for Change, Leadership Transparency, and Anti-Corruption Efforts

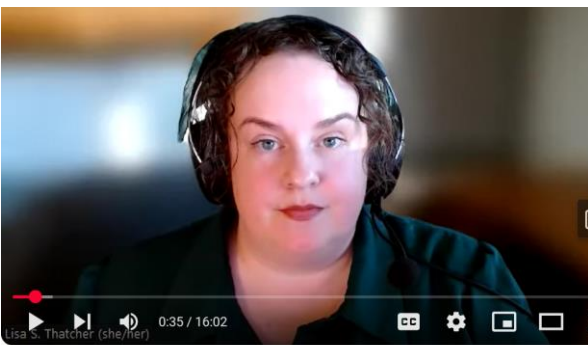
- CTM, with its large membership base, has been accused of silencing local groups and taking the side of companies and government officials instead of working on behalf of union members. Some include unions operate on paper only, and function as a place for the sale of the benefit of NAFTA and the automotive industry, now Mexico's largest export field.
- In 2019 the first case of the UNAC trade agreement passed, setting an Labor Reformation Mechanism into motion using RJ and ADM for organizational accountability, and fostering the development of independence, democratic unions with lower rates of corruption and higher levels of international policy adherence.

Progress: Moving Forward

Cultural Identity Fit & Room for Growth

- The UN has recognized that Mexico could see RJ practice coming from indigenous practices, including the Zapotec community, to mirror cultural practices with international policy alignment and increase its humanistic style.

[Click here](#) to view Poster



RJ in Mexico: An Interconnected Approach for International Policy Alignment & Labor Redevelopment

[Click here](#) to view the video presentation

References

- American Bar Association. (2024) February 2024 in brief: International business law. https://www.americanbar.org/groups/business_law/resources/business-law-today/2024-february/february-2024-brief-international-business-law/
- Appiah, K. A. (2006). *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a world of strangers*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Braithwaite, J. (1999). Restorative justice: Assessing optimistic and pessimistic accounts. *Crime and Justice*, (25), 1–127. <https://doi.org/10.1086/449287>
- Braithwaite, J. (2001). *Restorative justice and responsive regulation*. Oxford University Press, Incorporated.
- Castillo-Muñoz, V. (2017). Revolution, labor unions, and land reform in Baja California. In *the other California: Land, identity, and politics on the Mexican borderlands* (1st ed., pp. 52–73). University of California Press. <https://doi.org/10.1525/california/9780520291638.003.0004>
- de Carvalho Ramos, A. (2016). Control of conventionality and the struggle to achieve a definitive interpretation of human rights: The Brazilian experience. *Revista IIDH* 64(1), 11-23. Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos. <https://repositorio.iidh.ed.cr/handle/123456789/1383>
- de Jesus Gorgon Gomez, G, Barajas Languren, E., & Lamas Meza, S. A. (2021). The constitutional paradigm of restorative justice in Mexico and its link with international law through conventionality control. *Forensic Research & Criminology International Journal*, 9(1). <https://medcraveonline.com/FRCIJ/FRCIJ-09-00339.pdf>
- Galaway, B., & Hudson, J. (1996). *Restorative justice: International perspectives*. Lynne Rienner Publishers. https://www.rienner.com/title/Restorative_Justice_International_Perspectives
- Gupta, A. K., & Govindarajan, V. (2002). Cultivating a global mindset. *The Academy of Management Executive*, 16(1), 116–126. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AME.2002.6640211>
- Hermanson, J. (2022). Mexico's independent union movement: An overview of recent victories and challenges ahead. *LaborNotes*. <https://labornotes.org/blogs/2022/11/mexicos-independent-union-movement-overview-recent-victories-and-challenges-ahead>
- Holman, J. (2017). NAFTA: How 'ghost' unions exploit workers in Mexico. *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2017/9/1/nafta-how-ghost-unions-exploit-workers-in-mexico>
- Javidan, M., Dorfman, P. W., Mary Sully de Luque, & House, R. J. (2006). In the eye of the beholder: Cross cultural lessons in leadership from Project GLOBE. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 20(1), 67–90. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMP.2006.19873410>
- Meyer, E. (2014). The culture map. <https://erinmeyer.com/>
- Petersen, G. (2021). Early democratization, corruption scandals and perceptions of

corruption: evidence from Mexico. *Democratization*, 28(2), 333–352.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2020.1819246>

Thatcher, L. (2024, November 12). RJ in Mexico: An Interconnected approach for International Policy & Labor Redevelopment. [Video]. YouTube.
https://youtu.be/aCSCCInxPIY?si=7nONkHtXT_-RWu7I

About the author



Lisa S. Thatcher's current work with Indiana University's Center for Evaluation, Policy, & Research (CEPR) positions her to have frequent collaboration with universities, governmental agencies, and global foundations to conduct social and behavioral sciences research along with both policy and program evaluations for data-driven decision-making. Ms. Thatcher incorporates her all-ages history museum educator past with her anthropology background to contextualize her work inside of socio-cultural constructs. She focused on LGBTQ+ HR policy change during her Master's in Leadership Development and is currently pursuing her PhD in Global Leadership by examining the dynamics of restorative justice in organizational leadership and development. Although her dissertation work is set to take a critical theory interpretivist phenomenological qualitative approach, she often works with quantitative quasi-experimental design through CEPR.

GLI classification: 75

Paper type: Poster

Received: June 10, 2024

Accepted: October 12, 2024



Considerations for a Sustainable Development in Paraguay

Marcelo Echague Pastore

Fulbright Scholar in Residence 2023-2024, Indiana State University

Director of Economic Studies and Financial Analysis at National Securities

Commission, Asunción, Paraguay

Abstract

Background: In the last several decades, Paraguay has experienced a remarkable degree of economic and political stability that has enabled the country to achieve important levels of growth and development in several fields. This indeed is not negligible in the context of a traditionally unstable Latin American region, but also because Paraguay itself has rarely benefitted from such a long period of soundness across its more than 200 years of independent—yet convulsive—history. **Objective:** As expected, this situation provides a more than valuable opportunity for the country to ensure that such economic growth and concomitant development are not temporary but can be sustainable in time, hence continuously improving the welfare of the Paraguayan population without jeopardizing its environment and intrinsic (natural) resources. **Method:** Any opportunity then brings about several aspects and challenges that policymakers will have to consider and eventually address in order to effectively materialize such a chance for real and long-lasting development. **Results:** This study intends to share relevant thoughts and considerations about the current state of the Paraguayan development process, while attempting to identify some crucial policy actions that can maximize the probabilities of successful development for this country or, to put it differently, to reduce the risk of falling into a middle-income trap that perpetuates the characteristically Latin American vicious circle of poverty and inequality.

Keywords Socioeconomic Development, Paraguay, Policymaking, Long-Term Growth, Sustainability

Paper type: Research article

Citation: Pastore, M. (2025) Considerations for a sustainable development in Paraguay. *Αρετή (Arete) Journal of Excellence in Global Leadership*, 3(1). 180-205. <https://doi.org/10.59319/arete.v3i1.903>

Introduction

Economic theory has often argued that macroeconomic stability is a necessary, although not always sufficient, condition for growth and eventual development of a particular country (Ames et al., 2001). Being familiar with the historically volatile Latin American context, one could certainly add that political stability is also a fundamental pre-requisite for public policies to be effectively implemented within a nation and hence potentially contribute to a sound socioeconomic performance over time (Carmignani, 2003).

Paraguay, a landlocked developing country in the middle of South America, is of particular interest as it has been able to obtain and preserve an unusual relative steadiness in both economic and political stability for the last several decades. This has consequently been translated into some reasonable levels of continuous growth that eventually allowed the country to develop itself on different fronts, probably like never before in its rather turbulent history (Borda and Masi, 2021). Yet significant challenges remain and might sooner or later deter this promising development story, as evidenced more than once across the Latin American continent.

Given this unique opportunity that currently exists in Paraguay, the research question asks, “What can policymakers do to actually secure a long-lasting and environmentally sustainable development of the country?”

To undertake this certainly complex and extensive problem, this research will provide several useful considerations and policy recommendations that focus mainly on some areas or sectors that are deemed crucial for the nation to succeed in its development quest.

The study is a qualitative Historical Case Study research design. A

historical case study is a hybrid research strategy intended to accomplish what a historical study and case study alone cannot. It analyzes data from the past to the present, using eclectic data sources (Widdersheim, 2018). This study utilizes explanatory topologies based on a descriptive-explanatory analysis of major economic, political and social features of the country, while concentrating chiefly in the 2003-2023 period. This design approach allows for an in-depth examination of the complex interconnections between different aspects within the specific context of the country being studied.

The research is significant not only by the relevance of Paraguay’s current development path but also by some of the new grounds in which policy recommendations are being formulated. At the same time, and considering the extent of the problem at hand, this study embeds the logical limitation of not covering other fields or domains that may also contribute in one way or another to Paraguay’s sustainable development.

In addition to the normal literature review process that is intrinsic to social science studies, this research has also conducted several discussions and exchanges with a pool of experts listed in the acknowledgment section, so as to gather valuable information and comments that might not be contained in formal documentation.

Nevertheless, and given the sensitivity or potential conflict of interest regarding some of the collected arguments, the confidentiality of such opinions and information will be respected by refraining from mentioning any names beyond the acknowledgment section, upon request of the experts.

It is noteworthy that this study will follow a simple, yet effective structure based in four sections. First, it will provide a succinct synopsis of the main economic, political and social events that took place before 2003, to facilitate the reader's understanding of the context that Paraguay had to deal with before attaining macroeconomic and political stability. Second, this researcher will focus on the fruitful 2003-2023 period by examining its major features, outcomes and corresponding policies. Third, the study will focus on the main risks and remaining challenges that could hinder Paraguay's growth and development in the near future. Finally, and in light of this, it shall be able to provide hopefully sound policy recommendations in key sectors and areas that may contribute policymakers' efforts to ensure a sustainable development path for Paraguay.

Historical Background

As indicated in the Introduction, this first section aims to highlight major economic, political and social facts or events that shaped most of Paraguay's history. The purpose of such retrospective is simply to better comprehend the country's context before centering attention in the 2003-2023 period, as it will clearly facilitate the analysis of the following sections.

Like many nations in Latin America, Paraguay used to be a Spanish colony for several centuries before becoming an independent state in the early eighteenth century. Located roughly in the middle of South America, the capital city of Asuncion initially gained certain importance to the Spanish conquistadors in their efforts to expand their territories (Kruger, 1981). Many exploring groups, troops and contingents would start their journeys from Asuncion in order to found new forts and towns, especially in those lands that were comparatively richer in terms of natural resources.

As stated in Roper and Van Ruymbeke (2007), the Spanish crown was particularly interested in gold and silver during the early stages of the colonial period. Asuncion in that sense may have helped the establishment of new colonies in Upper Peru for example, where precious metals were located. But the Province of Paraguay itself, as it was known at the time, was lacking such precious metals, plus it did not have access to any oceans or seas, thus considerably limiting its potential growth and development through commerce with the Iberic Peninsula as well as with other Spanish colonies of the time.

The Spanish crown logically ended up concentrating its efforts in developing other so called more promising areas and regions across the continent, although it still decided to replicate in Paraguay an exploitation model that was widely used in Latin America known as the "encomienda". Reyes and Sawyer (2020) describe the encomienda as large pieces of land that are entrusted by the crown to a few Spanish citizens so that it could be cultivated, while typically using indigenous people as cheap or free labor for such endeavors.

This historical fact is important according to Ortiz (2016) and Rojas (2012), in the sense that such a widespread and long-lasting model is seen by many as the origin of Paraguay's and Latin America's in general stark poverty and social inequality. Eslava and Valencia (2023) highlight that this is true not only in terms of wealth and land distribution but also regarding the impetus for privileged families or influential elites with considerable economic and political power over the country.

From 1811 onward, it is noteworthy that Paraguay has traditionally been politically unstable, while also characterized by a large number of authoritarian regimes during several periods of time. Starting with its first ruler, Dr. Jose Gaspar Rodriguez de Francia, who eventually was named "Supreme and Perpetual Dictator" of the nation from 1816 until his death in 1840, leading a totalitarian and self-sufficient regime designed to consolidate power and isolate the newborn country from external conflicts (Cooney, 2005).

At the other end of the timeline is Gral. Alfredo Stroessner, last dictator of Paraguay and also known for holding the longest dictatorship in Latin American modern history (1954-1989). During the Cold War, he was part of the infamous Operation Condor to prevent communism and socialism from expanding in the Southern Cone of the continent, therefore leading state terrorism and open repression against opponents, agitators and left-wing sympathizers (Zoglin, 2001).

In between both leaders, a countless number of revolts, coups d'état, uprisings, and other sort of rebellions took place in Paraguay, with violence and brutality usually being the common denominator (Pangrazio, 2008). In fact, one can count at least 35 different presidents between 1870 and 1924, plus 11 other presidents in the period from 1936 to 1954, which then yields an effective presidential term of only 1.5 or 1.6 years on average during these periods of time (Espinola, 2010).

This reveals not only the political instability that defined the country through several periods of independent history, but also the difficulty to effectively carry out—under those circumstances—any public policy or deep reform oriented to a long-term socioeconomic development of the nation. Economically speaking for example, Paraguay had two missed opportunities for economic "takeoff" that occurred precisely in moments of great internal stability and solid government rule.

The first case occurred during the period 1844-1862 under the presidency of Carlos Antonio Lopez. Considered as the first constitutional President of Paraguay, he opened the country to foreign trade and fostered its development by importing technology, sending government staff abroad for higher education and training, while also bringing foreign experts to help replicate an Industrial Revolution process in this traditionally agrarian state (Espinola, 2010).

Despite promising initial success, as evidenced by the emergence of one of the first railways in the region; the Triple Alliance War (1864-1870) against Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay ended up devastating the economy as well as destroying most of the infrastructure and industry that had been created (Espinola, 2010). In terms of population, some studies suggest that about 90% of the male population was killed in battle (Alix-Garcia et al., 2022), with many of them being children who were also sent to the front in a desperate attempt to change the course of the war.

Much closer in time, the other eventual missed opportunity refers to Gral. Stroessner's regime. Having consolidated his power through the military and the Colorado political party, he was able to prevent, or eventually suppress, any insurrections during his 35-year totalitarian rule. Although attained by force i.e., non-democratically, this political stability did enable Stroessner's government to pursue biennial and subsequently five-year development plans, with the most important involving the construction of a binational dam with Brazil called "Itaipu" (Espinola, 2010).

Such a colossal infrastructure project, considering Paraguay's small population and the fact that Itaipu would end up being the most powerful dam in the world (only surpassed by China's Three Gorges dam in the early 2010s), implied a significant impact in Paraguay's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) mainly during the time of its construction: 1974-1981. As indicated by Rojas (2001) and Espinola (2010), the country averaged an economic growth of 9.7% during such period and even attained double-digit rates between 1977 and 1980. The completion of the project however and a coincidental fall of international commodity prices at that time marked the end of this second opportunity for economic takeoff.

From then on, Paraguay experienced rather sluggish economic growth until the beginning of the next century. As Borda and Caballero (2020) state, the roughly called Latin American "lost decade" of the 1980s actually lasted for about 19 years (1984-2002) in the case of Paraguay, with the country generally suffering from deteriorating terms of trade, volatile weather conditions including droughts and floods, monetary and fiscal disequilibria, as well as a deep financial crisis that originated in 1995 and officially came to an end in 2003.

It is noteworthy however, that Paraguay did not fully commit to the Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) model of economic development that was so trendy in the region, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s. Thus, the indebtedness of the state never reached the astronomical levels experienced by many Latin American nations during the 1980s, and therefore no hyperinflation has ever been recorded to date. As a matter of fact, Paraguay's currency named "Guarani" is considered to be one of the oldest in Latin America with 80 years in circulation as of 2023 (Carvallo Spalding et al., 2023).

Similarly, the liberalization wave that followed in the late 1980s and 1990s, reflected in the economic policy prescriptions fostered by the Washington Consensus across the region e.g., privatization of state-owned enterprises, reduction of fiscal deficits, etc., were only partially implemented in Paraguay (Masi, 2010), as no last resort loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) -or other international financial institutions- were needed in those times.

Dealing now with the social aspects the same argument can be derived from the previous economic discussion. Paraguay has not actually stood out in terms of social policies or reforms, partly because of the authoritarian and/or politically unstable scenarios that have depicted a considerable part of its history (Rojas & Acosta, 2022). In fact, some of the country's early social protection policies were actually carried out in periods of stable governments and relative internal (and external) peace.

For example, even though the Ministry of Public Health was created in 1936, a period of considerable political turmoil in Paraguay, Garcia (2017) stated that it only started to effectively deal with contributory social security and welfare since the more stable 1940s, particularly in collaboration with the by-then newly established Instituto de Prevision Social (1943) and its social legislation. The field of non-contributory social programs however would not arise until the early 2000s in Paraguay, as we will reveal in the next section of this study.

The Period 2003-2023: A Concrete Chance for Growth and Development

Having missed two opportunities in the past, a number of internal and external factors would lead Paraguay into a third promising chance for long-term growth and sustainable socioeconomic development. This section explores which main elements or conditions enabled the country to attain both political and macroeconomic stability, while also providing details of the major outcomes and achievements obtained in the past twenty years.

As described in the previous section, authoritarianism has been a constant feature throughout a considerable part of Paraguay's history. More recently, the longest dictatorship in Latin America, directed by Gral. Stroessner, only came to an end in 1989 when his own son's father-in-law, Gral. Andres Rodriguez, organized a plot to remove him from power. This meant that the nation still had a long way to go in terms of a real democratization process.

Events highlighted by Lopez (2011) such as a failed coup attempt in 1996 by Gral. Lino Oviedo or even the assassination of Vice-President Luis Maria Argana in 1999, with the subsequent violent political crisis that forced incumbent President Raul Cubas to resign, prove that it would certainly take several years, or even decades, for the democratic system to fully consolidate in Paraguay. While far from perfect, sufficient gains were made by 2003, with a newly and democratically elected government that would benefit from relative political stability to carry out some most-awaited economic reforms needed at that time.

As stated, macroeconomic stability is a necessary, yet not always sufficient, condition for sustained growth and development in any country (Ames et al., 2001). But the "lost decade" outlined in the previous section meant that Paraguay was facing several challenges in the economic front until the early 2000s. Such worsening conditions eventually translated into fiscal and monetary imbalances that would require serious reforms at some point to correct them.

A selective default finally took place by the end of 2002 when the country was not able to cover some treasury-bond payments, while also having difficulties paying for its own civil servants' salaries (Charotti et al., 2019). With few options on the table, the new government, in consensus with several stakeholders across society, decided to carry out a series of deep structural reforms to stabilize the economy in the short run and lay the groundwork for a sound macroeconomic growth in the middle and long run (Borda, 2006).

To support those reforms and maximize the odds of success, the government ended up signing a standby arrangement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) at the end of 2003. This proved to be key not only as a political shield but also regarding technical cooperation offered to public institutions e.g., Central Bank of Paraguay (BCP) and Ministry of Finance of Paraguay (MoF), which was deemed necessary for such policies to be effectively implemented.

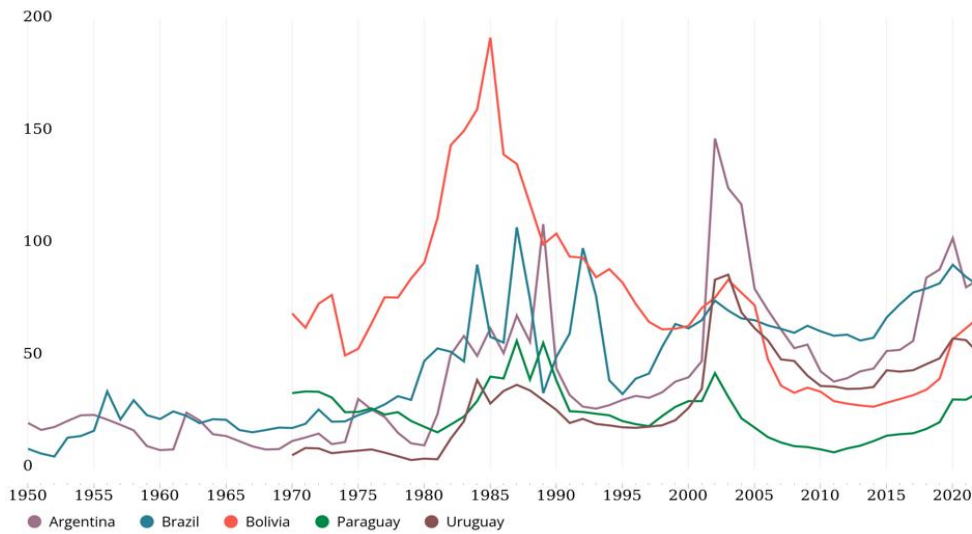
In fact, the previous stand-by arrangement signed with the IMF dated back to 1969. Even though several loans have been approved by the organization during Paraguay's membership, the country has never withdrawn any amount as of June 2022 (IMF, 2022).

In terms of legislation, a major breakthrough consisted of the approval by Congress of Law 2421 of "Administrative Reorganization and Fiscal Accommodation" in 2004. As Borda (2006) suggested, this legal text gave real incentives to economic agents to reduce informality e.g., formalizing firms and decreasing tax evasion, while ensuring at the same time fiscal sustainability and pushing forward a less regressive tax system, particularly with the introduction for the first time of the Personal Income Tax in Paraguay.

Together with other important public policies and reforms in fields as distinct as: customs, pensions, public administration efficiency, public institutions strengthening, civil service competency, or even public procurement transparency (just to cite a few); the government was eventually able to improve the population's trust in at least some public entities, promote the participation of civil society in the formulation of public policies and control of public resources, foster economic growth and employment, while ultimately attaining to reduce poverty and inequality, among other significant achievements (Borda & Masi, 2021).

In numbers, the intended changes had an immediate impact on the fiscal side by obtaining consecutive surpluses since 2004 and for eight years in a row. This logically also had a positive effect in the levels of public sector debt, with the debt-to-GDP ratio going down from about 50% in 2002 to a record low of 11% in 2011, while remaining as one of the lowest rates in the region (see Figure 1).

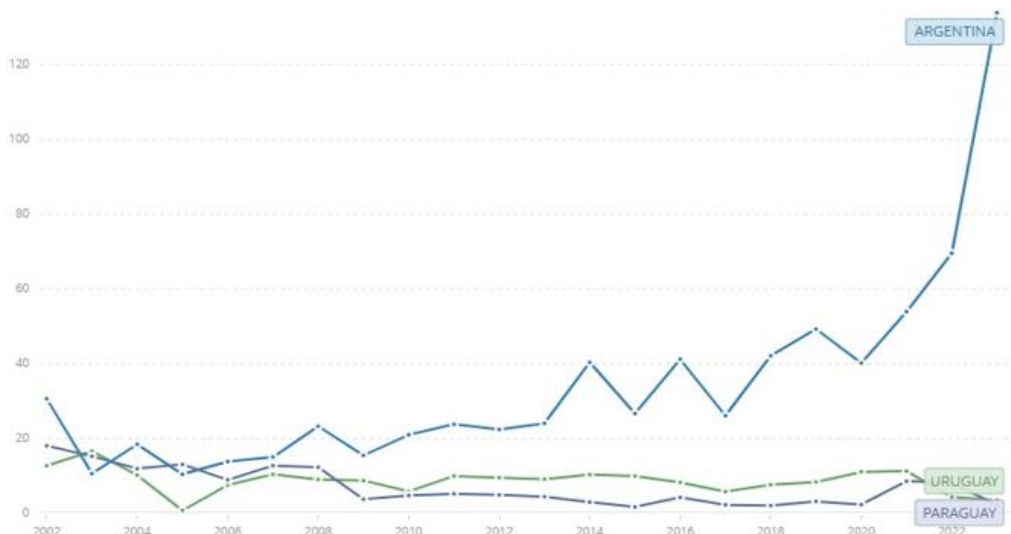
Figure 1
Central Government Debt (percent of GDP, period 1950-2022)



Note. Adapted from the Global Debt Database (GDD), International Monetary Fund.

On the monetary side, inflation decreased from 14.6% at the end of 2002 to only 2.8% by December 2004, while averaging 5.4% during the whole period 2003-2023, hence lower on average than neighbouring countries such as Uruguay or Argentina (see Figure 2). Central Bank of Paraguay (BCP) estimates an inflation rate of 3.7% for 2023.

Figure 2
GDP Deflator (annual %, period 2002-2023)



Note. Adapted from the World Development Indicators (WDI), World Bank Group. Data estimated for 2023.

It is important to highlight that BCP has decided to move to an inflation targeting framework since 2011 (Cuevas, 2016), thus allowing the entity to better control this variable over time i.e., 6.9% in 2003-2011 versus 4.2% in 2012-2023 on average. At the same time, the institution was able to build on international reserves through time, jumping from only USD 600 million in 2002 to around USD 10 billion twenty years later, i.e., about 25% of the country’s (GDP) in 2022. This is higher than many countries in the South American landscape, as displayed in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3
Total Reserves (% of total external debt, period 2003-2022)



Note. Adapted from the International Debt Statistics (IDS), World Bank Group.

The financial sector in turn has benefitted from this more stable and predictable setting. Having strengthened its regulatory framework, while boosted by the creation of a Deposit Guarantee Fund (Law 2334 of December 2003) as well as of a second-tier development bank named Development Finance Agency (AFD), via Law 2640 of July 2005, the banking sector experienced solid conditions for operations in Paraguay (Cantero et al., 2018).

This resulted in lower interest rates and longer maturities over the years, deepening the access to credit and savings through financial inclusion, while also providing a wider range of financial products e.g., “first house” soft loans via AFD and even greater liquidity levels to the market. In fact, only two financial entities went bankrupt after 2003 in Paraguay, with the default rate being only 3.4% for banks as of October 2023 (BCP, 2023).

All these sound macroeconomic conditions then helped support Paraguay’s continuous growth in the coming years, until achieving the upper-middle income status in 2014 according to World Bank Group (WBG, 2014) member countries classification. In fact, Gross National Income in 2022 was approximately USD 5,920 per capita (current US dollars), while BCP (2023) estimates a real GDP growth of 4.5% for Paraguay in 2023. Data from the latter institution also reveals that GDP expanded at an average rate of 3.7% during the period 2003-2023, characterized by a faster pace

in 2003-2017 (4.5%) as compared to 2018-2023 (1.8%). All in all, these results outperform most countries in the South American region as well as the Latin American continent on average, as it can be observed in Table 1 below.

Table 1
GDP growth rate (annual %, period 2003-2023)

Country/Region Name	Average Growth Rate (%)
Argentina	2.9
Brazil	2.2
Chile	3.4
Ecuador	3.5
Paraguay	3.7
Uruguay	3.2
Latin America and the Caribbean	2.5

Note. Adapted from the World Development Indicators (WDI), World Bank Group. Data estimated for 2023.

Part of such a dynamic first subperiod is related to the favorable commodities “supercycle” led by China. As explained by Gallagher (2016), China’s own industrialization and fast development process led to a boom in commodity demand that raised prices of natural resources worldwide during 2003-2013, therefore leading to higher revenues in Latin American agro-exporting countries such as Paraguay.

Furthermore, this South American nation had been continuously expanding its agricultural frontier during such years which, combined with favorable weather and sanitary conditions in general, resulted in continuously increasing outputs over time, particularly soybean, beef, wheat, and maize, and eventually becoming in 2022 the world’s third and eighth largest exporters of soybeans and beef respectively (MoF, 2023-b). The second subperiod however (2018-2023) was marked with severe external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent shutdown of the Paraguayan economy in 2020; and the extreme droughts that affected crops in 2018-2019 and 2021-2022.

In addition to agriculture and livestock, the country began in the 2010s to diversify its production of goods and services as well as its export destinations. Paraguayan economy has traditionally been very dependent on Brazil and Argentina, meaning that decoupling from those historically unstable markets would therefore imply a lesser degree of volatility.

Based on the incentives embedded in the Maquila Regime for example, the industrial sector started to substantially develop itself in areas as diverse as textiles, plastics, metallurgy, and even auto parts, with almost 300 firms generating formal employment and over USD 1 billion in investments as of October 2023 (Ministry of Industry and Trade of Paraguay, 2023).

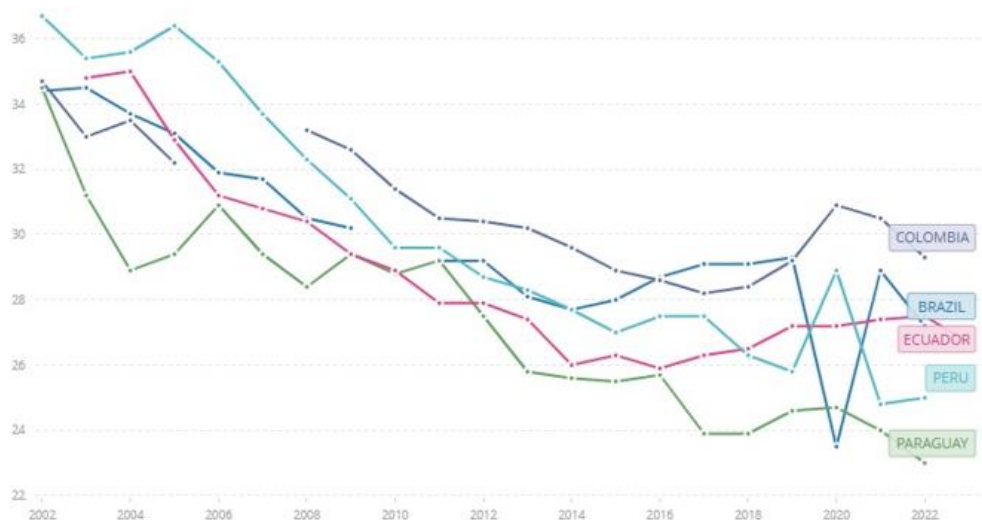
To sustain this countrywide economic expansion, successive governments have also made significant efforts to narrow the large infrastructure gap in Paraguay by continuously increasing investment in public works e.g., improving the population’s

access to basic utility services, roads system expansion, etc. Data from Paraguay’s National Institute of Statistics (INE, 2023) reveals that access to sewage, water and electricity in Paraguay respectively increased from 59.3%, 60.7% and 90.6% in 2000 to 89.5%, 91.2% and 99.7% in 2021.

As for national paved roads, this indicator went up dramatically from only 3,886 kilometers in 2003 to over 12,000 as of June 2023. Indeed, physical investment undertaken by the central government has raised from only 1.9% of GDP on average during 2003-2011 to over 3.1% in the period 2019-2022 (MoF, 2023-c). A larger investment from 2020 onwards is also explained however by counter-cyclical measures and public health strengthening due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As could be expected from several years of economic growth, poverty and inequality indicators have improved substantially in the last several decades. According to Paraguay’s National Institute of Statistics (INE), poverty was in fact cut by almost half between 2002 and 2022, hence attaining a lower poverty than many countries in South America (see Figure 4). While less evident to the naked eye, the degree of inequality as reflected by the income Gini coefficient (i.e. a statistical measure of income inequality by summarizing the distribution of income across a population) did ameliorate during the same time period from 0.57 in 2002 to 0.45 in 2022, producing an even sharper decline than other emerging countries like Brazil or Colombia (see Figure 5).

Figure 4
Poverty Headcount Ratio at National Poverty Lines (% of population, period 2002-2022)



Note. Adapted from the World Development Indicators (WDI), World Bank Group.

Figure 5
Gini Index (period 2002-2022)



Note. Adapted from the World Development Indicators (WDI), World Bank Group

It is noteworthy that non-contributory social programs e.g., conditional cash transfers, also played a part, to a greater or lesser extent, in assisting vulnerable groups of the population since they were first implemented in Paraguay in 2005 (Serafini, 2019). “Tekopora” program for example is a conditional cash transfer scheme that was introduced back in 2005 and has been considered the flagship of non-contributory social programs in Paraguay since then.

Dealing with education, it is praiseworthy to highlight the implementation and continuation of the Carlos Antonio Lopez Scholarships (called BECAL in Spanish language acronyms) since 2015. This higher education program sponsored by the government enables hundreds of professional Paraguayans each year to undertake graduate studies i.e., Master’s, Doctoral, and postdoctoral degrees, in top universities around the world, with the purpose of improving human capital and help with sustaining Paraguay’s own development process (Amarilla, 2023). It is important to mention in that sense that BECAL is the first education program of such type since former President Carlos Antonio Lopez decided in the mid-1850s to send civil servants abroad for higher education and training.

In terms of public planning, a major step forward took place with the design and approval in 2014 of the National Development Plan Paraguay 2030 (PND). This was the first time that such a strategic document for long-term development has ever been developed and executed. In other words, this ended up being a state plan rather than just a government program, as it was implemented in consensus with the main stakeholders across society i.e., the private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), cooperation agencies, civil society, academia, etc., and well beyond a 5-year presidential term.

Considerable efforts in wider transparency, public information and accountability have also been made by successive governments in Paraguay during the past twenty years. As Achar et al. (2021) and Vargas Ferreira et al. (2022) suggest, major

accomplishments such as the approval in September 2014 of Law 5282 of Free Access to Public Information and Government Transparency, together with Law 5189, approved in May 2014, that deals with Compulsory Provision of Information Regarding Public Payrolls, made it possible for ordinary citizens to gain open data access in a variety of fields, such as public budgeting, public debt, legislative activity, procurement contracting or even civil servants salaries.

There are several additional positive aspects that also should be pointed out in the environmental sphere. One of these positive aspects is that Paraguay already has an energy matrix that is clean and nearly 100% renewable, mainly due to the powerful Itaipu and Yacyreta binational hydroelectric plants, which are contributing positively to the planet as a whole (Llamosas et al., 2021). The other feature is that policymakers have become more and more conscious in recent years about the sustainable aspect of any serious economic development process.

Some relevant proactive actions have been made lately in Paraguay, as illustrated by the legal creation in 2018 of a Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MADES), the approval of a Carbon Credits legislation in 2023 (Law 7190), and the incorporation within the Paraguayan stock market, since 2020, of an innovative financial instrument named Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Bonds, developed by the Securities and Exchange Commission of Paraguay (2021). In spite of such progress, further work still needs to be done in this and other fields if the state truly wishes to continuously improve its population's welfare without jeopardizing the country's resources and natural environment.

Main Risks and Challenges to Overcome

Despite the significant progress attained in the last decades, Paraguay's development course still faces significant risks, obstacles and challenges in numerous areas that could hamper such a promising path experienced to date. The purpose of this section is then to identify the main threats and enduring hurdles within the socioeconomic, political, institutional, and environmental spheres, which will later facilitate a discussion of sound policy advice before concluding this study.

Starting with politics in Paraguay, major gains have certainly been made in terms of democracy since 1989. The process however is still some steps away from being fully consolidated, as revealed for example by the two impeachment attempts that former President Abdo had to face in 2019 and 2021, or even the actual impeachment of former President Lugo in a legally dubious 24 hours record-time procedure back in 2012 (Szucs, 2013).

At the same time, it must be mentioned that political alternation is virtually non-existent in Paraguay. The Colorado Party has dominated the political scene for about 75 consecutive years as of 2023, with a single exception for the period 2008-2013, when such political body lost presidential elections against a coalition of multiple opposing parties. This long-lasting reign, together with common Latin American bad practices that include influence peddling, nepotism, bribery, extortion, or even vote buying for election day, suggest that public institutions and entities in Paraguay might *de facto* be intrinsically tied to the interests of a political party's affiliates and other groups of influence (Konovalova, 2020).

As a matter of fact, Paraguay is widely perceived as a very corrupt country, ranking 137 out of 180 nations according to Transparency International's (2022) *Corruption Perceptions Index*. Paredes (2018) and Vargas Ferreira et al. (2019) point out that such corruption is then mostly translated into weak institutions, deficient law enforcement, inefficient public entities, loose controls and regulation, unclear property rights, lack of legal certainty and fragile physical safety, among other undesirable outcomes.

On the national security front, a sharp rise of organized crime in recent years, related mostly to arms and drug-trafficking, has considerably increased the risk that Paraguay might eventually become a "failed state" or a "narco state" (Ramos, 2023), particularly given the economic power, high-level political connections and violent attacks displayed by transnational criminal organizations, such as Comando Vermelho or Primeiro Comando da Capital, as well as by local guerrillas that include the Ejército del Pueblo Paraguayo. As a matter of fact, the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime (2023) has ranked Paraguay as the leader in arms trafficking within Latin America together with Jamaica, while being number 4 worldwide in terms of overall organized crime.

Considering the country's economic stability, several indicators have deteriorated over time and may therefore put some pressure on the successful macroeconomic stability gained since 2003. The latter has in fact enabled the country to improve its credit rating since 2004 until attaining BB+ in 2015. The score however saw no further progress as of 2023, implying that there are still considerable challenges to be overcome, such as weak institutions, rule of law, low human development, and high levels of corruption (Fitch Ratings, 2023).

On the fiscal side, data from MoF (2023-a) reveals that deficits have been occurring continuously since 2012 in Paraguay, breaching the Fiscal Responsibility Law limit of 1.5% of GDP every single year since 2019. Consequently, the debt-to-GDP ratio has been rising permanently from 2012 onwards until stabilizing around 40% since 2020, which is basically the ceiling estimated by the IMF (2017) for such country.

Additionally, and despite having achieved some diversification in terms of production as well as export destinations, the country's economic performance is still very dependent on a few primary commodities including soybean, beef, wheat, and maize, while also particularly vulnerable to external shocks such as droughts, floods, plagues, oil price changes, international interest rates movements, etc., as is characteristic by a small and open developing economy (IMF, 2022).

The resulting volatility in growth is exacerbated by the deficit of adequate infrastructure across the nation, both in urban and rural areas. Despite the efforts undertaken in recent years to raise physical investment in public works such as energy, water, sanitation, and transportation, the infrastructure gap in Paraguay is still huge as it represents about USD 36 billion according to official estimates, with roads alone exceeding USD 17 billion in the views of Jara and Vera (2018). For comparison purposes, the nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for this country attained USD 41.7 billion in 2022 (WBG, 2023).

At the same time, the quality of such investments and of public spending should be considered. Besides the low credibility derived from the already mentioned widely perceived corruption, the Paraguayan State is also criticized for being highly inefficient regarding its administrative functions as well as in the provision of goods and services. From poor quality roads and bridges to unreliable electricity and water distribution, together with overruns in infrastructure projects, overpriced public procurement, and the heavy weight of civil service salaries within public budgets (they represented 70% of all tax revenues in 2021), all these factors end up having a major impact in government spending (Izquierdo et al., 2018).

Another relevant challenge regarding the State's functioning in Latin America is its own capacity to plan, lead and effectively articulate its own entities as well as other stakeholders, including the private sector, civil society, cooperation agencies, and academia for the design and implementation of public policies (Scartascini et al., 2010). Despite some praiseworthy actions illustrated in the previous section, such as the socially agreed structural reforms in the early 2000s or the long-term development of the National Development Plan Paraguay (PND) 2030, the culture of policy-making in Paraguay is still mostly confined to the public sphere, which tends to generate skepticism among the population in terms of the projects' transparency and their expected results.

This in turn creates a dilemma when dealing with the current tax scheme in Paraguay, which basically involves flat rates of only 10% applied as (1) Value Added Tax, (2) Personal Income Tax and (3) Business Income Tax (MoF, 2023-a). Despite its attractiveness in terms of simplicity and low costs for investors, the system is still regressive and clearly insufficient to provide more and better goods and services to the population (Ortiz, 2020). Nevertheless, it might not be easy to convince any taxpayer about raising levies until more efficiency and better spending quality is demonstrated by the Paraguayan State (Borda and Caballero, 2018).

Likewise, taxpayers might be unwilling to pay higher taxes knowing that many their fellow citizens are not contributing to the State coffers. In fact, estimates for 2021 suggest that over 70% of laborers in the country are working in informal conditions (Union Industrial Paraguaya, 2022), typically including precarious jobs of low productivity in micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). The latter usually involve no written employment contracts, lower than minimum salaries, no social security contributions and so forth. For instance, less than a quarter of the total workforce in Paraguay contributed to a retirement system in 2022 according to INE (2023).

At the same time, the shadow or underground economy was estimated at 46% of the GDP (PRO Desarrollo Paraguay, 2021), which involves not only illegal activities such as smuggling, forgery, and money-laundering, but also legal businesses (IMF, 2022), where many of the firms producing those goods and services are unregistered MSMEs. In fact, more than 95% of firms are considered to be MSMEs in Paraguay, while only 26% of them comply with all formality standards (Insfran, 2021).

In the long run, the abovementioned context puts extra pressure on the middle-income trap risk for Paraguay. The latter case is understood as a situation in which a low-income economy rapidly achieves middle-income levels but then fails to attain a developed status, which in the case of Paraguay translates into a large informal sector

and concomitant shadow economy that imply a generalized low productivity derived from an already low-skilled labor force (Alarco & Castillo, 2018; Paus, 2017).

Recent results from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests undertaken in 2022 reveal that basic education in Paraguay is crudely dismal, as it ranked 80 out of 81 countries, meaning for instance that 7 out of 10 students at school cannot understand what they read (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2023). Besides the poor quality, Paraguay's public spending on education is also relatively low, even when comparing to the Latin American average: 3.6% Vs. 3.8% of GDP in 2022, respectively (WBG, 2023). The situation is even more worrisome when considering that most of the population in the country is still young, with people between 15 and 29 years old representing 27% of the total population in Paraguay (INE, 2023), thus implying that the current demographic bonus or dividend is being "wasted" in informal low value-added activities.

The problem of productivity is also closely linked to poverty and to a rather precarious healthcare system in Paraguay. Indeed, poverty levels may have been reduced by half since 2002, but they still affect a quarter of the nation's population. Even worse, one out of ten individuals in rural areas does not get enough earnings to cover basic food necessities (INE, 2023). Additionally, only 27% of the population has medical insurance while just 57% of pupils at school present an adequate nutritional status (Sistema de Vigilancia Alimentaria Nutricional, 2022).

Dealing now with the environmental challenges, it must be said that although Paraguay does fully produce clean and renewable energy, its consumption however is still highly dependent on 100% imported fossil fuels (Llamosas et al., 2021). Both public and private transportation are mostly moved on diesel and gasoline, thus generating poor air quality standards in main cities like Asuncion or Ciudad del Este. In addition, the traditional practice of slash-and-burn farming is still widely used in the Latin American countryside, including Paraguay, particularly during dry seasons, which results in entire South American regions occasionally covered in smog (Mielnicki et al., 2005).

Linked to the infrastructure gap presented earlier, water and sewage coverage might have increased considerably in the last two decades, but there are still critics about the reliability and quality of the services. In numbers, merely 15% of the total population has access to sanitary sewage systems and only 64% of the drinkable water consumed by households is actually considered to be free of pollutants (World Bank Group, 2020). Another major issue in main Paraguayan cities is the scarcity of rainwater drainage systems, as suggested by the scarce 25% coverage in the country's capital of Asuncion (INE, 2023). Furthermore, the structural deficit regarding proper waste collection and management translates into a third of Paraguayan families that end up burning their own garbage according to INE (2023), attaining a rate of almost 70% in rural areas.

Lastly, deforestation constitutes another matter of concern for Paraguay's sustainable development challenges. Large exports of timber in the past together with a continuous expansion, mainly since the early 2000s, of the agricultural frontier for farming and livestock activities, have resulted in forest coverage area decreasing from around 51.8% of the territory in 1990 (Zanetti et al., 2017) to 44.3% in 2022 (National Forestry Institute of Paraguay, 2023). Despite a constant deceleration of deforestation rates in

recent years, increasing holistic efforts will need to be made by public authorities in liaison with other stakeholders to ensure ecosystem preservation and gradually restore the degraded environment in the long run.

Policy Recommendations for a Sustainable Development Path

The previous sections have provided valuable political, economic, and environmental knowledge of Paraguay as well as its development process, while focusing chiefly on the major features, outcomes and remaining challenges that stem from the prosperous past several decades. This last part of the study is intended to provide some useful considerations and policy recommendations for a long lasting and environmentally sustainable development in Paraguay.

Secure Long-run Macroeconomic Stability

The prosperous period 2003-2023 is mainly founded on a well-achieved macroeconomic and political stability in Paraguay. Successive fiscal deficits in the last 12 years however and the concomitant and dangerous increase of public debt to near-limit ceilings suggest that real adjustments, in both income and government spending, must be made in the short- and middle-run, in order to return to fiscal equilibrium. The Fiscal Responsibility Law in that sense has proven to be not robust enough to prevent large and sustained deficits over time, which implies that an eventual reform of this legislation or search for more effective fiscal anchoring must take place. A Policy Coordination Instrument (PCI) for Paraguay was approved by the IMF in 2022, with one of the pillars being ensuring macroeconomic stability and resilience by rebuilding fiscal buffers and securing fiscal sustainability. At the same time, the exploration and eventual creation of a countercyclical fiscal fund could help mitigate macroeconomic shocks and reduce volatility as a whole.

Build up Public Policies Based on Transparency and General Consensus

Besides being a good practice *per se*, previous experience in Paraguay has demonstrated that agreed public policies are possible and tend to work much better when previously debated with main stakeholders across society. Involving and having open discussions with other participants not only lowers resistance towards a certain plan, project or reform, but also maximizes the chances for its successful implementation and follow-up, while improving at the same time public institutions' credibility. Risk of corruption diminishes with sufficient transparency and empowerment by civil society. For the public institutions' credibility to occur, the government should ensure data transparency as well as fluent and continuous communication channels with the press and civil society, about both its ongoing actions and future intentions, so that information is transmitted accurately, and citizen oversight becomes more effective in practice.

Propel State Reform and Strengthen Civil Service

The existence of over 400 public entities in Paraguay is widely viewed as excessive by scholars and the country's population, with several of them considered to have no significant functions or even overlapping some of their intended roles with other existing bodies. It has also been a common practice in Paraguay that some public entities are created or enlarged just to generate new positions that can be occupied by the dominant political party's affiliates or other influential group members.

The high cost of sustaining such a heavy apparatus, added to the complicated coordination among all these numerous public agencies, suggest that a reduction of the State should eventually take place. The current government's majority in both chambers of Congress, together with the favorable political cycle that usually accompanies a new head of state in Paraguay during the first two years of administration, insinuate that at least some of the State reforms might be politically feasible within this presidential term.

Performance evaluations at the entity and public servant level, together with a reform of civil service that encourages competency for access and promotion, would certainly contribute to reduce costs, mitigate corruption and improve efficiency in most layers of public administration.

Keep Promoting State Planning and Strengthen Project Management Capacities

Successive governments have learned in recent years about the importance of long-term planning that go even beyond a presidential term, which should certainly continue and encouraged at every level. Ideally, they should all be aligned with the flagship State development plan in Paraguay, namely the PND 2030.

Nevertheless, the public sector has also revealed notable weaknesses regarding the effective implementation of projects, plans and policies, with a large number of them being poorly executed, badly monitored or just discontinued in time. This suggests that proper training and capacity-building in terms of project management skills is essential for key public entities to successfully lead, supervise, articulate, carry out and fine-tune long-term development programs.

Strengthen the Justice System and Drive Electronic Government

Considered to be one of the weakest aspects of public administration, legal uncertainty is certainly a major cause for preventing larger domestic and foreign investment flows to Paraguay. This is due, in part because most investments take place in sectors displaying high return rates. A serious reform of the justice system, based on strengthened independent institutions, simplified procedures and transparent processes would bring positive results to the judiciary and society, thus improving its own credibility vis-à-vis the citizenry as well as the international community. In so doing, a faster implementation of electronic government, and of technology in general, across all branches of government including the judiciary would improve efficiency, enhance law enforcement and help palliate corruption, by ameliorating tracking and limiting manual interferences within legal affairs, among other benefits.

E-government and technology in general provide clear beneficial gains in terms of public sector transparency, process efficiency, cost-reduction and corruption abatement. Besides the justice system itself, this is also particularly significant in sensitive areas such as public procurement, public utilities, human talent, land entitlement and tax collection, just to cite a few (Vargas Ferreria et al., 2020).

Sustain a High Rate of Physical Investment in Infrastructure

Paraguay's infrastructure gap is certainly massive and requires a consistently high rate of investment to eventually close it. Given the current constraints in terms of indebtedness, it becomes imperative that the country looks for alternative ways to finance new projects, while also ranking or prioritizing them according to their respective impact or necessity i.e., economic, social, environmental, etc. Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) and similar schemes can prove to be suitable when properly regulated, communicated and implemented. Infrastructure is key in any long-term development process and should remain a top priority for Paraguayan policymakers, since public works also tend to contribute to substantial and formal employment generation.

Establish a Clear Industrial Policy and Define an Ambitious Foreign Strategy

Paraguay seems to lack an explicit industrial policy that is aligned with the PND 2030. In that sense and following the successful examples of Japan and other East Asian economies, it would be certainly helpful for Paraguay's development efforts to introduce an industrial policy that identifies the most promising industrial sectors, thus with high growth potential and socioeconomic impact, while determining the mechanisms, tools and resources to support their whole maturing process. A logical "champion" that could potentially lead the industrial policy on the ground would be Paraguay's Ministry of Industry and Trade, but other entities such as the Ministry of Finance might also prove to be effective, especially at the macroplanning and treasury levels.

This is particularly important considering the necessity for this nation to formalize and diversify its economy which is still heavily dependent on a volatile primary sector, by fostering higher value-added activities that can contribute to formal employment generation. Some viable (non-exclusive) actions may include, for example: (a) stronger promotion efforts of the attractive maquila sector; (b) deeper integration of MSMEs into clusters or larger industrial processes; (c) exploration of non-traditional industries with minimal logistical overruns, given Paraguay's landlocked condition.

In so doing, the support provided by a tangible and ambitious foreign strategy would be essential to build alliances, facilitate international cooperation and ensure that proper investments, technology, know-how or other means can safely arrive and efficiently operate in the country.

Promote Teamwork and Strategic Alliances with Other Stakeholders

The State's own limited knowledge and resources suggest that policymakers should continuously look for collaboration and strategic alliances to obtain better results. This includes resorting not only to financial and technical assistance provided by international cooperation agencies, but also to public and private entities, either domestic or foreign, that can also contribute with their expertise or other means. In general, it is widely recommended that public policies follow a triple helix model of innovative design and implementation, where government, private sector and academia, work together in successfully establishing socioeconomic development programs.

This model could logically be extended to other sectors such as foreign aid agencies, non-governmental organizations, civil society, etc. The government however always remains the champion of the incumbent project and must then select a sufficiently strong and capable public entity for effective execution, supervision and coordination of the participants involved. The MSMEs sector constitutes an interesting positive example since, despite the high complexity of this segment, the Ministry of Industry and Trade in Paraguay still managed to effectively take into account most aspects involving policy planning (i.e. legal, technical, financial, etc.) while integrating a very large -and diverse- number of stakeholders to gradually improve the situation of these firms.

Promote a Total Reform of the Education System

Results obtained from PISA tests in 2022 are sufficiently revealing about Paraguay's poor education quality. The latter not only refers to elementary and high school levels, but is also applicable to tertiary education, as very few universities in Paraguay are listed high in international rankings and many do not even offer accredited courses or careers. Since any sustainable development process eventually requires continuously higher productivity levels from a country's population, then a serious reform of the whole educational system is required if Paraguay genuinely aspires, as stated in the PND 2030, to transform itself into a knowledge-based economy.

Strengthen the Pension System and Propel Universal Social Protection

The existing retirement and pension system in Paraguay is virtually unsupervised, hence putting at risk the resources contributed by formal workers and the financial system. In fact, some retirement and pension funds have collapsed in the recent past and others present schemes that are not sustainable in the long run.

The IMF staff report stemming from the 2022 Article IV Consultation with Paraguay stresses the need to improve the surveillance of cooperatives and insurance companies, while also highlighting the necessity of establishing a proper supervisor for pension funds and update its regulation. This is especially important when combined with a well-implemented universal social protection policy that minimally includes a basic retirement plan and medical insurance for all laborers, which ultimately acts as the main foundation for the formalization of labor market and the economy as a whole.

Design a Holistic Strategy to Combat Organized Crime and Strengthen Public Safety

Previous experiences in Mexico and Colombia, as well as recent events in Ecuador, reveal that organized crime is not to be taken lightly as it may seriously ruin all the development efforts undertaken in Paraguay during the last several decades. Policymakers should then prioritize the design of a thorough long-term strategy to challenge this scourge and strengthen public safety as a whole. Given its complexity and transnational characteristic, it is advisable that the government builds alliances and seeks support from other nations and organizations, whose expertise and resources in intelligence, technology, materiel, military training, etc., would be extremely valuable for a compelling planning and its successful implementation. For illustrative purposes, Paraguay basically had no functioning radars -civil or military- as of 2023 to effectively control its skies. Several alternatives that span from direct

U.S. military assistance to foreign private contractors providing homeland security could be discussed, as part of a plan to, for example, reinforce border controls.

Develop an Integral Policy for Environmental Protection and Restoration

In light of previous planning experiences in the field, such as the National Strategy and Action Plan for the Preservation of Biodiversity in Paraguay 2015-2020 (ENPAB), Paraguay should move on to creating a newly improved long-term strategy as well as a comprehensive policy that deals not only with environmental protection but also its restoration. As a matter of fact, a proposal for a National Environmental Policy was being elaborated by MADES, although no updates on the matter have been published since 2021.

In so doing, a new holistic environmental strategy and policy would have to effectively align other stakeholders and actions being made in several related areas, such as the National Forestry Institute of Paraguay in its efforts to produce a long-term National Plan of Forest Restoration, while defining a 'champion' public entity that can effectively lead its implementation. Once again, technology would certainly play a major role in this process by providing persuasive surveillance and ensuring law enforcement, including real-time detection of illegal deforestation or slash-and-burn practices.

Foster Electric Mobility in Public and Private Transportation

The country's surplus in hydroelectric production makes it suitable for usage in the transportation sector. With appropriate investment, incentives, promotion and a proper regulation, this would allow a gradual replacement of fuel-powered automotives, especially old, malfunctioning diesel city buses, with new non-polluting vehicles and other potential means of electric mobility e.g., train shuttles or monorails in congested Asuncion and its surrounding metropolitan area, thus substantially improving the air quality in major cities.

For instance, assisted technically and financially by distinct cooperation agencies, Paraguayan authorities have published in 2023 a Master Plan of Electric Mobility for Urban Public and Logistical Transportation in Paraguay (PMME). Its successful implementation would then require a strong public institution with the ability to lead specific projects, articulate participants, execute tasks, delegate responsibilities and effectively monitor the plan's progress as a whole.

Conclusion

A succinct historical revision revealed that Paraguay, a broadly poor and unequal country since its colonial origins, has frequently been plagued with significant political turmoil that would hardly facilitate any enduring socioeconomic development policies. Despite several missed opportunities for “takeoff” in the mid-nineteenth century and much later, during the late 1970s, a third more promising chance for long-lasting sustainable development would rise in the early 2000s and continue to this day.

Founded on a relatively steady democratic system as well as a solid 20-year macroeconomic stability, the nation has been able to achieve considerable gains on several fronts, including for instance, becoming a major worldwide producer and exporter of primary products such as beef and soybeans; inequality reduction and sharp poverty decline; implementation of non-contributory social programs; long-term public planning; deeper and sounder financial sector; wider transparency and public sector accountability; fully renewable and clean energy matrix; growing environmental consciousness and novel legal, financial, and technical proactive actions for its conservancy.

Nevertheless, this study also delineated significant challenges that still need to be overcome by public authorities to secure the positive path undertaken so far. Notable risks such as eventually falling into a middle-income trap given Paraguay’s large informal sector, vast infrastructure gap, and low productivity workforce, or even worse; becoming a “failed state” due to the recent surge of organized crime linked to drug and arms-trafficking; all suggest that serious efforts must be made with the goal of effectively combatting high corruption levels, weak public institutions, and an ineffective education system, among other critical issues.

In an attempt to provide policymakers with useful considerations for ensuring a long-lasting and environmentally sustainable development, this researcher has been able to identify key policy actions for the Paraguayan case, which include building up public policies based on transparency and general consensus; promoting State and education system reforms; strengthening civil service and the justice system; driving electronic government; establishing clear industrial and foreign policies; designing a holistic strategy to combat organized crime and strengthen public safety; sustaining a high rate of physical investment in infrastructure via Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) or similar policies; fostering electric mobility in public and private transportation; developing an integral policy for environmental protection and restoration; strengthening the pension system and propelling universal social protection; among other major recommendations.

Finally, the intricate tapestry of Paraguay's development journey underscores the significance of the insights presented in this study. The political and socioeconomic challenges outlined here not only highlight the depth of the issues at hand but also emphasize the critical importance of the policies proposed to address them. However, the path to effective implementation is fraught with complexities that require careful planning and nuanced understanding. This study serves as a foundational step, but it also calls for further, in-depth research to refine the strategies and mechanisms necessary for the successful realization of Paraguay’s development objectives. Such continued exploration is essential to crafting solutions that are both robust, sustainable, and adaptable to the dynamic realities of the nation’s growth.

References

- Achar Rojas, J. P., et al. (2021). Medición del impacto de la ley de transparencia y acceso a la información pública en el Paraguay. *Revista Internacional de Investigación en Ciencias Sociales*, 17(2), 305–330. <http://scielo.iics.una.py/pdf/riics/v17n2/2226-4000-riics-17-02-305.pdf>
- Alarco Tosoni, G., & Castillo García, C. (2018). América Latina en la trampa de los ingresos medios o del lento crecimiento. *Análisis Económico*, 33(82), 5–29.
- Alix-Garcia, J., et al. (2022). Country of women? Repercussions of the Triple Alliance War in Paraguay. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 202, 131–167. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2022.07.025>
- Amarilla, J. (2023). Becas internacionales desde la teoría del capital humano y el enfoque de las capacidades humanas. *Journal of International Students*, 13, 230–236. <https://eds.p.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=c0915bd6-a465-46e7-834d-53c0e311be3b%40redis>
- Ames, B., et al. (2001). Macroeconomic policy and poverty reduction. *International Monetary Fund*. <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/exrp/macropol/eng/#ft2>
- Borda, D., & Masi, F. (Eds.). (2021). *Políticas públicas en Paraguay: Avances y desafíos: 1989–2020*. Centro de Análisis y Difusión de la Economía Paraguaya. <https://www.cadep.org.py/uploads/2022/05/Políticas-Pu%CC%81blicas-en-Paraguay.-Avances-y-desafi%CC%81os.-1989-2020-Cadep-2021.pdf>
- Borda, D., & Caballero, M. (2020). *Crecimiento y desarrollo económico en Paraguay: Balance y propuestas para una economía sostenible e inclusiva*. Centro de Análisis y Difusión de la Economía Paraguaya. <https://www.cadep.org.py/uploads/2022/05/Crecimiento-y-desarrollo-econo%CC%81mico-en-Paraguay-Borda-y-Caballero-2020.pdf>
- Borda, D., & Caballero, M. (2018). *Una reforma tributaria para mejorar la equidad y la recaudación*. Centro de Análisis y Difusión de la Economía Paraguaya. <https://www.cadep.org.py/uploads/2022/05/Reforma-Tributaria-2018.pdf>
- Borda, D. (2006). Paraguay: Resultados de las reformas (2003–2005) y sus perspectivas. *Organización de las Naciones Unidas, Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe, Serie Informes y Estudios Especiales*, 18. <https://repositorio.cepal.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/bc6d2f4e-cb35-450a-8b25-82078b30b11b/content>
- Cantero Sienra, J., et al. (2018). Sistema financiero paraguayo: Construyendo sobre sólidos fundamentos. *Repositorio Institucional del Banco Central del Paraguay*. <https://repositorio.bcp.gov.py/bitstream/handle/123456789/75/Sistema%20financiero%20paraguay.o.%20Construyendo%20sobre%20s%3%b3lidos%20fundamentos.pdf?sequence=1>
- Carmignani, F. (2003). Political instability, uncertainty, and economics. *Journal of Economic Surveys*, 17(1), 1–54. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6419.00187>
- Carosini, A. L. (2010). La política económica en el Paraguay: Avances, logros y perspectivas - antes y después de 1989. *Universidad Nacional de Asunción, Facultad de Ciencias Económicas, Dirección de Investigación y Extensión*. https://www.eco.una.py/eco/pdf/Política_Economica_FCE-UNA_Econ_Ana_L_Carosini_RD.pdf
- Carvalho Spalding, C., et al. (2023). El guaraní 1943–2023: 80 años de estabilidad – Fortaleciendo la soberanía monetaria en la era digital. *Repositorio Institucional del Banco Central del Paraguay*. <https://repositorio.bcp.gov.py/bitstream/handle/123456789/194/80%20A%C3%91OS%20DEL%20GUARAN%C3%8D-DIGITAL.pdf?sequence=4>

- Central Bank of Paraguay. (2023). *Anexo estadístico del informe económico*. https://www.bcp.gov.py/userfiles/files/Anexo_Estad%C3%ADstico_del_Informe_Econ%C3%B3mico_23_02_2024.xlsx
- Central Intelligence Agency. (2023). *The world factbook: Paraguay*. <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/paraguay/>
- Charotti, C. J., et al. (2019). The monetary and fiscal history of Paraguay, 1960–2017. *University of Chicago, Becker Friedman Institute for Economics*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3344828>
- Cuevas, G. (2016). El mercado de dinero en el contexto de metas de inflación: Antecedentes, evolución y desafíos: El caso de Paraguay. Repositorio Institucional del Banco Central del Paraguay. <https://repositorio.bcp.gov.py/bitstream/handle/123456789/84/El%20mercado%20de%20dinero%20en%20el%20contexto%20de%20metas%20de%20inflacion.pdf?sequence=5&isAllowed=y>
- Del Puerto, A. (2020). Análisis de la evasión fiscal en el Paraguay. *Revista de Economía y Administración*, 51(3), 45–68. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.revecoad.2020.03.00>
- Ferreira, C., & others. (2019). El impacto de las remesas internacionales en la reducción de la pobreza en el Paraguay. *Revista Latinoamericana de Desarrollo Económico*, 11(21), 81–98. <https://doi.org/10.18259/rld.v11n21.2019.75>
- Fitch Ratings. (2023). Paraguay's economic and fiscal policy analysis. <https://www.fitchratings.com>
- Fogel, R. (2021). Historia y desarrollo del sistema de transporte en Paraguay. *Investigaciones en Historia Económica*, 17(3), 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ihe.2021.01.001>
- Galeano, L. (2018). Distribución de la riqueza en Paraguay: Un enfoque crítico. *Revista Paraguaya de Sociología*, 55(1), 12–35.
- Gamarra, J., & Vásquez, R. (2022). Evaluación del sistema tributario paraguayo: Retos y perspectivas. *Journal of Tax Policy and Administration*, 7(4), 251–274.
- Hernández, A. (2020). Paraguay: Crecimiento económico y sostenibilidad en un contexto globalizado. *Revista Iberoamericana de Estudios de Desarrollo*, 16(2), 345–372. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40665-020-00112-4>
- Huang, K., & Jiménez, M. (2023). Agricultura y desarrollo en Paraguay: Un análisis histórico de políticas públicas. *AgroEconomía y Sociedad*, 28(2), 89–113.
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE). (2022). Resultados de la Encuesta Permanente de Hogares 2022. <https://www.ine.gov.py>
- Izquierdo, M., & Portillo, J. (2021). Inversión extranjera directa y su impacto en el empleo en Paraguay. *Revista de Economía Aplicada*, 34(9), 103–126.
- Jiménez, A., & Torres, M. (2019). Educación y equidad en Paraguay: Un análisis crítico de políticas públicas. *Educación y Sociedad*, 14(1), 59–82.
- López, E., & Martínez, F. (2022). El rol de las exportaciones en el crecimiento económico del Paraguay. *Revista Paraguaya de Economía*, 18(3), 33–48. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rpe.2022.03.002>
- Masi, F. (2017). El desarrollo económico del Paraguay en el contexto regional. *Centro de Análisis y Difusión de la Economía Paraguaya*. <https://www.cadep.org.py>
- Mendoza, R., & López, A. (2021). Pobreza y desigualdad en Paraguay: Evolución y desafíos actuales. *Revista de Estudios Económicos Latinoamericanos*, 15(4), 67–89. <https://doi.org/10.18235/reel.v15i4.2021.76>

- Ministerio de Hacienda. (2022). Informe económico del Paraguay 2022. <https://www.hacienda.gov.py>
- Molinas, J. (2023). Impacto de la industrialización en el desarrollo económico de Paraguay. *Revista de Economía Industrial*, 30(2), 211–235. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecoind.2023.05.003>
- Montenegro, C. E., & Patrinos, H. A. (2014). Comparable estimates of returns to schooling around the world. *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 7020*. <https://doi.org/10.1596/1813-9450-7020>
- Morales, G. (2018). La competitividad económica del Paraguay en el Mercosur. *Revista Mercosur de Estudios Económicos*, 12(2), 45–67.
- Muñoz, P., & Benítez, J. (2019). La informalidad laboral en Paraguay: Retos para el desarrollo inclusivo. *Revista de Políticas Públicas y Desarrollo*, 21(5), 98–112.
- Perry, G., & Maloney, W. F. (2007). Informality: Exit and exclusion. *World Bank*. <https://doi.org/10.1596/978-0-8213-7092-6>
- Portillo, R., & Giménez, A. (2020). El desarrollo sostenible en Paraguay: Un análisis desde los ODS. *Revista Internacional de Políticas Públicas y Desarrollo*, 5(3), 345–366.
- Ruiz, M. A., & Franco, A. (2022). La inversión en infraestructura y su impacto en el crecimiento económico del Paraguay. *Revista Paraguaya de Política Económica*, 19(1), 123–145.
- Sauma, P., & Trejos, J. D. (2019). Paraguay: Inequality, poverty, and public policy. *Journal of Development and Society*, 26(2), 159–182.
- Silva, R. (2021). Cambio climático y su impacto en la producción agrícola paraguaya. *Revista Ambiental y Desarrollo Sostenible*, 13(1), 67–85.
- Torres, V., & Morales, F. (2022). Innovación tecnológica y desarrollo empresarial en Paraguay. *Revista de Tecnología y Desarrollo*, 8(4), 299–316.
- Vera, J. M. (2020). Historia económica de Paraguay en el siglo XX: Lecciones aprendidas. *Revista de Historia y Economía*, 14(3), 1–28.
- World Bank. (2021). Paraguay country economic update. <https://www.worldbank.org>
- Zárate, L., & Cáceres, F. (2019). Desafíos de la educación superior en Paraguay: *Perspectivas futuras*. *Revista de Educación y Desarrollo*, 17(2), 209–224.

About the author



Prof. Marcelo E. Pastore is currently an Adjunct Instructor for the Master's in Leadership Development Program at SMWC. He's also a peer-reviewer of the Private Academic Library Network of Indiana (PALNI Press) and the Journal of Excellence in Global Leadership (Arete). Marcelo started collaborating with the Woods since 2023 during his US visit as a Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence from Paraguay, by giving lectures and helping tighten SMWC connections with South American institutions. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Economics and obtained a Master's in Public Policy from the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (Tokyo, Japan), while specializing in Financial Technologies (FinTech) and Sustainable Finance. Marcelo also has extensive ground experience in the financial sector, both by working as a World Bank country economist and by acting as Director of Economic Studies and Financial Analysis at the Securities and Exchange Commission (Paraguay). Back in his home country, he performs as an international consultant and higher ed lecturer/researcher for several academic institutions.

Acknowledgements

I extend my heartfelt thanks to Indiana State University, especially Dr. Debra Israel, Chair of the Department of Economics, for their support in preparing this research and enabling its presentation at various conferences.

I am also deeply grateful to the experts and collaborators who enriched this study with their insights, including representatives from PRO Desarrollo Paraguay, the Development Bank of Latin America, the Central Bank of Paraguay, the Ministry of Industry and Trade of Paraguay, the United Nations Development Programme, and others.

Finally, special thanks to Camila Ruiz Diaz and Violeta Carmona from Universidad Americana in Paraguay for their invaluable contributions to the literature review and expert discussions that elevated the quality of this work.

GLI classification: 89

Paper type: Research article

Received: August 16, 2024 **Accepted:** (November 15, 2024)



Adaptive Leadership Part One: Ethical Leadership and Historical Roots

Eric L. Hubbard, Ph.D.

Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, Terre Haute, Indiana, USA

Lisa S. Thatcher, M.L.D.

Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, USA

Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, Terre Haute, Indiana, USA

Kourtney Barrett, M.A.

Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College Terre Haute, Indiana, USA

Abstract

Background: Adaptable leadership can be indispensable in times of change, crisis, and growth, however, much like its originating theory of ethical leadership, it can be misused while in practice and it can fail to live up to its potential. Understanding and applying the virtue of altruism helps to protect against the pitfalls of the practice that Heifetz identified. The authors argue that further connecting the practice to adjacent leadership theories while also connecting theory and practice, provide an ethical anchor while allowing the practice to operate inside of modern organizations.

Objectives: Through this four-part series, the authors aim to enrich the understanding of adaptive leadership with this article focusing on the impact ethical leadership has had on the development of the practice. **Approach:** The authors will move readers through the ethical foundations and history of the practice (past), through modern uses including crisis leadership and shifting hierarchical structures (present), into further development and transformative leadership opportunities (future), ending in a case study to help develop leaders and their understanding of the theory (leadership as practice).

Keywords: Adaptive Leadership Theory; Ethical Leadership Theory; Global Leadership; Altruism; Organizational Development

Paper type: Research article

Citation: Hubbard, E., Thatcher, L., & Barrett, K. (2025) Adaptive leadership part one: Ethical leadership and historical roots. *Αρετή (Arete) Journal of Excellence in Global Leadership*, 3(1). 206-223. <https://doi.org/10.59319/arete.v3i1.915>

Series Preface

This article is part one of a four-part series exploring adaptive leadership. The first three parts of the series will explore different tenets of the practice, the rationale for why this content needs to be explored, and connections to other leadership theories. These foundational elements are dually framed in the timeline of adaptive leadership use and inside of the archetype framework established by Heifetz et al. (2009a). The final part of the series, a case study, takes the reader from the critical discourse into the role of a practitioner. Drawing on the ethics-based foundations of adaptive leadership, its current practical applications, and its potential future uses, this series encourages the reader to embrace Raelin’s (2016) concept of leadership-as-practice. The content from Parts One through Three may be applied to enhance the practice of global leadership education through case study discussions.

In Part One, the deep ethical roots of adaptive leadership are connected to the modern dynamics in the study of organizational development and leadership studies. Throughout the series, the use of adaptive leadership in different fields is explored with this first portion pulling its richness from the world of philosophy and ethics. To lay the foundation for the future of the series, the historical contexts of the practice are explored to help create a deeper definition of adaptive leadership. Adaptive leadership is framed as a virtuous pursuit that is altruistic in nature, however, it can be wielded as a banner by individuals or organizations to make a show of their actions. Altruism without an audience is key to adhering to the strong ethical foundations of adaptive leadership and Heifetz et al. (2009a) warned of problems when there is a dissonance between purported values systems and real-life actions. By exploring the issues with, history of, and connections to related leadership theories, this article lays the groundwork for a comprehensive look at adaptive leadership including an opportunity to put lessons learned into practice. Table 1 aligns the connections and differences between each of the four parts of this adaptive leadership series.

Table 1

Series Progression, Rationale, Connected Leadership Theories, & Connected Heifetz Archetype

Series	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4
Timing	Spring 2025	Summer 2025	Fall 2025	Spring 2026
Tenet	Virtue, Ethics, & Altruism	Change & Growth	Transparency & Trust	Case Study
In Action	Past	Present	Future	In Practice
Call to Action	Practice benefits from further definition and historical context	Current or recent practitioner exploration	Application and development for the future	Moving from theory to practice, need for Global Leadership education
Connected Leadership Theories	Ethical Leadership, Shifts in Onus from Personal to Outreach	Kotter Dual, Post-Hierarchical, Crisis Leadership, Change Agents	DEI+, Transformative Leadership	Leadership as a Practice
Connected Heifetz Archetypes	Gap Between Exposed Values and Behaviors	Competing Commitments	Speaking the Unspeakable, Work Avoidance	Working Through Common Issues

Introduction

In an increasingly interconnected world, the concept of adaptive leadership has gained global attention as leaders face the challenge of navigating complex, rapidly changing environments and cultures (Hamelink, 2015). Ethics plays a fundamental role across fields, including education, medicine, and business. Ethical leadership is vital not only for individual leaders but also for organizations, especially for the organizational culture, and its human capital. Ethics enhances stakeholder and client relationships, can boost revenue, and helps prevent crises such as media scandals. For employees, the organization's human capital, ethical leadership serves as a motivational tool. It helps them feel valued and appreciated, thus increasing productivity and collaboration, and the want to be at work (Western Governors University, 2020). Conversely, poor ethical environments, as Johnson (2025) notes, can negatively impact employee morale.

It is challenging, if not impossible, to create a universally effective ethics system (Winkler, 2022). A critical issue to address is whether dysfunction arises from cross-functional or cross-cultural differences when a universal ethical code is not or cannot be established. Individuals with global mindsets can still adhere to both the unspoken and spoken ethical codes to guide their cross-cultural interactions, both formally and informally (Hofstede, 1998; Meyer, 2014).

Hofstede (1998) highlights those cultural differences— such as those based on national culture—affect various organizational aspects, including structure, motivation, and management practices. The relationship between cultural values and ethical challenges, influenced by globalization and cultural differences, is crucial according to Johnson (2025). Understanding these dynamics underscores the importance of cultural awareness, sensitivity, and respect. Leaders must navigate these complexities to cultivate inclusive environments so that ethics are not undermined. This can begin by fostering human connections with stakeholders and employees and is strengthened through “support-oriented” and “relationship-oriented” leadership, two characteristic traits that Ly (2020) identifies as universally valuable.

In a study on the effectiveness of global leadership competencies conducted by Lange (2015), the results indicated that inquisitiveness is a key competency underpinning adaptive thinking, which enables individuals to navigate complex situations or tasks effectively, efficiently, and ethically. Lange's study also indicated that self-identity and self-confidence are the skills that empower individuals to engage and demonstrate leadership skills in these situations. This interconnection between ethics, cultural diversity, and leadership practices, sets the stage for understanding adaptive leadership.

Defining Adaptive Leadership

As implied by its name, adaptive leadership, developed by Ronald Heifetz and his associates, marks a shift in the traditional role of leaders. Instead of solving challenges individually, leaders modify their behaviors and actions in response to environmental challenges, involving their teams in the process. This notion highlights a follower-centered approach, focusing on the behaviors of the leader and how they aid their followers in changing, adjusting, learning, and growing through the process (Northouse, 2022).

At its core, adaptive leadership involves the ability to respond effectively to unforeseen challenges and shifting circumstances, demanding a high degree of innovation and flexibility (Northouse, 2022). However, this flexibility yields an ethical dimension that must not be overlooked. A global leadership lens further complicates the ethical terrain, as leaders must reconcile local practices with universal standards of fairness, justice, and integrity (Hamelink, 2015). This involves not only an awareness of, understanding, and respecting cultural differences but also ensuring adaptive strategies do not cast shadows on the merits of the leaders and their organization or diminish any group (Johnson, 2025). As global leaders face evolving challenges and diverse contexts, they must adapt their approaches while staying aligned with ethical principles and cultural sensitivities. In the following sections, the authors will explore the intersection of adaptive leadership and ethics through a global lens, examining how leaders can cultivate ethical practices while remaining adaptable.

Necessity of Better Connecting Adaptive to Other Leadership Theories

The call to action for this section of the series lies in expanding the body of knowledge by helping to fill a gap between the amazing work of early scholars in the field of adaptive leadership with the depth of historical context. However, it is important to note that although this series portion focuses on the past and the deep historical scholarship from the world of philosophy and ethics, connections are still able to be made to our modern world. One such area of connection is dealing with outcomes when something does not go right. For example, a break can occur when organizations espouse certain ethical tenets yet, in practice, those values are not in place. This concept is addressed in the context of early ethics discussions put forth by Aristotle in the section Virtue, or “Arete.” Modern authors discuss this discord and Heifetz et al. (2009b) found it to be one of the four archetypes of failures that can afflict adaptive leadership which are briefly addressed in the Gap Between Values and Behaviors section and will be explored further in Part Two and Part Three.

Theories addressing leadership practices, much like other multidisciplinary studies, are born from earlier constructs. Adaptive leadership shares its greatest overlap with ethical leadership theory. Not only are the early scholars on the subject from the world of ethics, the problems that can plague adaptive leadership are also shared with ethical practices. This brings the conversation back to the fundamental importance of authenticity and altruism in discussions about leadership practices and motives. Like ethical leadership, adaptive leadership emphasizes the necessity of recognizing dysfunction when purpose and drive lack altruistic intent.

The foundational background of both adaptive and ethical leadership practices is essentially the same. While adaptive leadership may diverge from ethical leadership studies and develop its own practices, both are foundationally similar and share overlapping principles. Those roots are deep, but alignment is still present in recent scholarship with a cluster of authors exploring and better defining ethical leadership. This includes the work by Brown and Treviño (2006) that focused on better connecting leadership development to the identified moral source/guidance an individual or organization pulls their behaviors from. That moral guidance is at the root of when adaptive leadership can be a success as well as a failure as identified by Heifetz et al.’s (2009b) work surrounding the gap between stated values and real-life behaviors.

Disingenuous behaviors that are not driven from a source of altruism are identified as eventually causing failings in both ethical and adaptive leadership dynamics.

The work by Brown and Treviño also laid the foundation for modern interpretations of the role of transparency and justice in ethical, and thus also adaptive, leadership which will be highlighted in the next two parts of this current series. Brown and Mitchell (2010) further developed the field of ethical leadership where the authors expanded the discussion on ethical leadership to emphasize the role of followership. They advocated for pathways that enable individuals at all levels to develop their own ethical behaviors while incorporating a 360-degree approach for reviewing, modifying, and improving the ethical actions of all members within an organization, team, or unit. In that piece, Brown and Mitchell also encourage articles like this to better develop the theoretical frameworks and community of understanding that integrate ethical leadership into the world of broader leadership theories. The authors call for nuance and connection and that includes doing a deep reach back to the foundational ethical leadership elements that bore out adaptive leadership.

Ethics from the Lens of Ancient Philosophy

According to research such as Sison (2018), the moral underpinnings for ethical leadership were first set by ancient philosophers such as Aristotle. The Aristotelian approach to understanding leadership provided three personal dimensions, or qualities, of a leader (Sison, 2018). First, that one must be wise from a practical standpoint (phronesis); second, one must have virtue (arete); and finally, an ethical leader must possess good intent, as in goodwill (eunoia).

Phronesis, or “Practical Wisdom”

The first dimension, phronesis, or practical wisdom, by Aristotelian definition, includes, but goes well beyond just having the moral aptitude to know “what should be done” (Girado-Sierra et al., 2024, p. 2). Rather, this trait is developed in concert with one’s own virtuous journey toward living a good life (Girado-Sierra et al., 2024). It should be noted that not all ancient philosophical definitions of phronesis align with Aristotle’s.

For example, Plato, who was Aristotle’s teacher, viewed phronesis as more of a subjective pursuit. This perspective, in Aristotle’s view, could lead to an apathetic approach to remaining ethical (Girado-Sierra et al., 2024). Contrastingly, the Machiavellian approach to phronesis incorporates shrewd calculation in opportunisms, which can also be compromising to a leader (Girado-Sierra et al., 2024).

As argued by Levine and Boaks (2014), it is arguable that ethics and leadership are not always tightly entwined. The authors note that often in modern leadership, leaders are not necessarily always recognized for their morality. Rather, effective leaders may be those who are viewed as those who are simply effective in the intended capacity of that leader’s role.

It is this disparity that may already set the stage for failures in modern leadership studies. A leader may be considered effective if they deliver on meeting the annual budget or achieving a strategic corporate goal, for example. The decision-making by leadership that led to a desired outcome may be considered moral, no matter the cost to the employees who were subject to the questionable practices of that leader willing

to sacrifice true moral integrity to achieve that objective (Ferrero et al., 2020). The complexities in today's world demand special care and attention to one's moral compass, as there is no clear right or wrong, in many cases (Davidson & Hughes, 2020), but clearly, outsourcing ethical leadership structures that are, by design, meant to serve the needs of the organization does not mitigate the moral risks to which the leaders themselves are exposed to.

The idea put forth by Levine and Boaks (2014) as a cautionary message beginning with Aristotle (Girado-Sierra et al., 2024) is an important one to consider. If phronesis, or practical wisdom, is in fact subjective to the environment, situation, or culture the leader is operating within, the acceptable variability could impact leadership in circumstances requiring adaptability. This variability is also highlighted by Throop and Mayberry (2017), who describe circumstances when organizations themselves determine a moral standard for their leaders, depending on the needs of the organization.

If this is the case, when is moral or ethical decision-making given a lower priority, or no priority at all? Engelke and Swegan (2024) note that in many modern models of ethical leadership, an ethical leader is one that "acts in a manner that is consistent with a moral structure or belief system" (p.121). At its surface, the authors point out that this structure or belief system could, in fact, be prescribed by the organization; moral structures could be compromised by several motivations, such as greed, organizational goals, or other self-serving elements.

Virtue, or "Arete"

The second dimension found in Aristotelian philosophy is virtue. As noted by Sison (2018), Aristotle not only considered virtue to be a dimension on its own, but a holistic approach to life itself that all dimensions of leadership are also deeply rooted in. Virtue of a leader is reflected in many leadership theories, although it is not common, if at all, to find a competency-based leadership model that relies solely on ethical aspects of leadership (Engelke & Swegan, 2024). Much like Aristotle's "Golden Mean," the weight of the ethical decisions that are made are on the individual leader. Johnson (2025) describes both Western philosophers such as Aristotle, as well as Eastern philosophers such as Confucius, emphasizing the importance of a virtuous character as part of ethical leadership roles within society, organizations, and family.

According to Niemiec (2019) there are common threads between Aristotle's Golden Mean and the competencies of an ethical leader that are offered in Engelke and Swegan (2024) that demonstrate the reliance that modern ethical leadership models share with Aristotelian and other ancient philosophies. For example, a comparison between Aristotle's virtues (Niemiec, 2019), and competency-based ethical leadership (Engelke & Swegan, 2024) reveals that integrity, in form, is common between the two. The virtue of moral indignation, or justice as fairness, is also present in competency-based ethical leadership as moral courage or willpower. Integrity as an ethical leadership competency is also reflected throughout Aristotle's virtues; arguably, integrity is one of the most comprehensive ways of describing what comprises much of one's ethos, or virtuous character. According to Johnson (2025), the following elements are some of what constitute an ethical leader's character: courage, wisdom/knowledge, justice, humanity, empathy, and transcendence, among other

virtues. Engelke and Swegan (2024) also expand this list to include trust, transparency, and possessing a moral mindset as hallmarks of an ethical leader's character.

Throop and Mayberry (2017) propose that there is a need for a new, evolving set of virtues, which is necessary to address the complexities of leading in today's dynamic world. The authors acknowledge the dependence that has existed on maintaining the spirit of Aristotelian virtues, while also noting that organizations are seeking ways to shift the virtue mindset to learn to instinctually operate ethically in a global setting, while utilizing a revised concept of virtue to effectively address five different forms of transition challenges: 1) adaptive, 2) collaborative, 3) systems, 4) humility, and 5) frugality. Citing the language of Throop and Mayberry offers that "Today's greatest social challenges are not so much technical problems as they are adaptive challenges where the problem definition is not clear-cut, and technical fixes are not available" (p. 222).

Notably, the declaration offered by Throop and Mayberry (2017) highlights the need to acknowledge that organizations often prescribe core competencies unique to their organizational culture. The authors also introduce the idea that if an organization's prescribed 'virtues' do not support flourishing within that culture, they become a hindrance to excellence in leadership and innovation.

The implications for this idea are significant, as it allows for a glimpse into the fragile nature of virtue when it comes to resolving complex ethical dilemmas where there may be competing organizational priorities. As previously illustrated by Girado-Sierra et al. (2024), there is a pronounced risk in an organization's efforts to produce virtuous tenets for itself, where the tendency could be to factor in motivation, such as financial benefit, to moderate the influence of purely acting in accordance with Aristotelian virtues. Despite this, there are calls for an ethical pivot to better accommodate the ethical needs and demands of the extremely complex global environment in which leaders are engaging within (Gohl, 2024).

Eunoia, or "Goodwill"

The third dimension, described by Aristotle, is eunoia, or goodwill. According to Aristotle's teachings, regarding a leader's character, goodwill refers to the intention or motivation behind an act, which is what makes the act good. Based on this premise, even an act that results in a positive outcome is not considered ethical if the intention is not pure. According to philosopher Emmanuel Kant, goodwill is an act of moral duty, regardless of the outcome (Okpo, 2023). When intention matters, one does not have to delve deeply into goodwill to understand that it can easily be corruptible when subjected to the influence of elements such as organizational goals, as well as considering the extreme complexities of leading ethically on a global stage that mandates adaptability, flexibility, and compromise.

The Enduring Role of Philosophy in Modern Leadership

The "why" regarding reliance on ancient philosophies in modern leadership theories is an unquestionable and critically important role in shaping today's leadership studies. As eloquently stated in the following quote found in Sułkowski et al. (2024):

As we reflect upon the treasure trove of knowledge that history offers, we must also turn our gaze towards the horizon of the future, brimming with boundless possibilities. In an era marked by the digital revolution, the rise of artificial intelligence, and an intricate web of global interconnectedness, comprehending leadership through a modern prism becomes paramount. This necessitates a harmonious blend of age-old philosophical wisdom with the challenges and paradigms of today's world. (p. 3)

Sulkowski et al. (2024) offer the perspective that contrasts what can often be found in modern leadership doctrine; namely, that leadership is not a modern construct “conceived in modern boardrooms or recent leadership retreats” (p. 3). Rather, the authors characterize leadership as “deeply embedded in the annals of human history...bedrock upon which civilizations are built, and empires established...a force guiding, influencing and shaping human society” (p. 3). The argument addresses that leadership's consistent enduring presence should not be mistaken for being static; rather, leadership is dynamic in nature, always changing and morphing to conform to the needs of the present, its paradigm shifts in step with the changes within the society. The authors unite the historical characterization of leadership to its contemporary state by offering that:

The once singular focus on might and power slowly gave way to more nuanced forms. These forms value wisdom, ethics, and vision. Leaders were no longer just warriors but thinkers, visionaries, and philosophers. This evolution was not serendipitous but intricately linked to the broader tapestry of human thought and philosophy. The symbiotic relationship between philosophy and leadership is profound. While leadership involves making decisions, guiding people, and inspiring visions, its foundations often rest on deeper philosophical principles. Philosophical moorings influence the ‘why’ behind the leadership actions. Why should one lead with integrity? Why is a particular vision pursued over another? These questions find inspiration in the philosophical doctrines of the times. (p. 3)

Even with disparities between the different moral philosophies, such as between utilitarianism being focused on the greatest good, or most favorable outcome, versus Aristotelian ethics, which is heavily weighted on the moral process itself as being most important to an ethical outcome, there is one common denominator, that being the importance of the human in the equation. Given this, when beginning to explore the “how” related to ethical modern leadership, it becomes apparent that it is arguably more critical now than ever to base leadership studies on ancient moral teachings.

The complexity of the world, and the introduction of quickly evolving technologies that can produce autonomous outcomes previously within the realm of human debate, requires a solid foundation for operationalization. The threat of losing the human element in ethical decision-making can be very real, if not tethered to solid philosophical ideologies. When accepting that the modern changing leadership landscape demands flexibility and adaptability, the accompanying urge to create systems that relieve the human of the responsibility for the ethical outcomes must still be avoided. When outsourcing the creation of policies that define what is ethical for the organization, and for its leadership, it is important not to discard the philosophical

elements that provide a safety barrier for leadership. In the next section of this article, the evolution of leadership thought, and the “how” for addressing today’s challenges, will be explored further.

The Evolution to Modern Ethical Leadership

Ronald Heifetz, a leading authority in leadership studies, states that today’s challenges for leaders are not technical problems, rather they are adaptive in nature, demanding a different leadership mindset (Throop & Mayberry, 2017). Throop and Mayberry offer the following in response to Heifetz’ statement:

For businesses to flourish, leaders will need to behave in new ways consistent with a finite, complex, uncertain, changing, collaborative, connected and caring world. This will require a shift in dominant virtues that characterize most corporate cultures today. We use the term “virtues” quite broadly to describe dispositions to think, feel and act in skillful ways that promote the aims of a practice. (p.222)

There are two notable points in the above comments from Throop and Mayberry. First, there is a suggestive phrase, namely ‘this would require a shift in dominant virtues’ that can be understood to refer to adaptability, given the existence of non or less dominant virtues that a leader would rely less on, if not rely on at all. Second, when referring to the term ‘practice’ as it relates to virtue, there is still a clear connection that exists to Aristotelian philosophical principles. Aristotle’s core belief is that to be truly virtuous, one must constantly practice virtuous behavior. Throop and Mayberry do give a nod to Aristotelian virtue ethics when explaining that companies often will identify core competencies or corporate “virtues” that they desire their employees to have. Given this to be truth, is it possible that an organization can manufacture a set of core “virtues” itself that serves its organizational needs, gives its leaders the ability to adapt under a moral code, yet at the same time does not compromise the practice of ethical behavior? The authors do provide a partial answer to this, positing that under the model of effective performance, competencies are complex patterns of “thought, feeling, and motivation imbedded in enduring character traits” (p.222) and not just skills, then the application of ‘virtues’ if in alignment with Aristotelian philosophical ideology, can result in the flourishing of an organization and its employees, while if they are not aligned, “even the best leaders and innovative strategies are often thwarted by virtues...” (p.223).

There is an enduring influence of the human ethos in ethics and morality, whether in individual behavior or operationalized within an organizational setting. Throop and Mayberry’s position is that true virtue nurtures and allows for flourishing, while also preventing unethical practices and strategies from occurring. If this is accurate, then it becomes appropriate to believe that “ethos” in the Aristotelian philosophical sense, is still very much a part of modern leadership practices. According to Wagner (2023) it is certainly plausible that the practical application of philosophical moral concepts as models can be useful, in general terms, for complex ethical decision-making. However, is it possible for an organization to manufacture ‘virtuous’ tenets that allow for it to flourish in a business sense of the term, yet still allow for the human beings making decisions for it to be able to act in accordance with their ethos? Especially in a fast changing, complex globalized 21st century environment that demands, among other elements, adaptability, there must be an enduring reliance of dominant virtues in the

face of complex, emerging ethical issues (Banks et al., 2021). This is a critical point, given the existence of many potentially conflicting interests that can influence and challenge leaders in a competitive business world.

Davidson and Hughes (2020) explored the dimensions of moral leadership through an educational lens, and how the use of the Defining Issues Test (DIT), the foundation of which is constructed from Kohlberg's moral stage theory, highlight differences in moral reasoning stemming from measurement of specific educational experiences. The DIT is utilized across many disciplines, and the results of which demonstrate that there is a danger in a reliance on the existence of a common moral baseline for leaders. It becomes apparent that due to the complexity of today's ethical climate there is a need for modern ethical frameworks to complement a leader's ethos and allow for ethical decision making in uncertain and often volatile, conflicting ethical considerations.

Discussion

The Gap Between Values and Behaviours

The previous section highlighted that moral gaps could form when attempting to overlay a traditional moral philosophy over a complex ethical dilemma that can exist in our modern world. Wagner (2023) points out that traditional moral philosophies commonly relied on for a moral 'code' are not ideal for today's complicated world, not because they do not provide sound moral reasoning, but because they are ideologies and not ethical models. Moral 'slips' that would be allowed by one ideology, would not be allowed in another. For example, virtue ethics recognizes the best outcome for resolving a moral dilemma may be one that considers both extremes and chooses the path of lesser evils (i.e. The Golden Mean), while Utilitarianism would consider the best outcome as one that achieves the most benefit, regardless of the morality of the steps taken to obtain an outcome. Taken at face value, these two moral ideologies would appear to contradict each other, making them unable to be relied upon for ethical decision-making.

Importance of Identifying Core Essentials of Adaptive Leadership

In conducting research for the article, the authors noted that adaptive leadership found in various publications was either utilized as a descriptive term, or conversely, within the context of a theory, depending on the subject matter of the literature. To minimize any confusion, the authors have elected to provide a comprehensive description of adaptive leadership as a theory, paired with adaptive-innovative theory. As cited in Northouse (2022) "AL [adaptive leadership] endures significant criticism surrounding its lack of theoretical underpinnings, empirical research, clear conceptualizations, and evidence-based support for the framework's basic tenets" (p.24). Pairing adaptive leadership theory with adaptive-innovation theory resolves at least some of this criticism and provides an understanding of adaptive leadership in true practice.

Nöthel et al. (2023) state that adaptive leadership theory is one that is set apart from other leadership theories such as transformational, authentic, and servant leadership because it best captures the complexities of the leader-follower dynamics. While theories such as the aforementioned focus on the leader's influence through elements such as inspiration and motivation; adaptive leadership theory relies on leader and follower roles to leverage social learning to rapidly adapt to a rapidly changing environment that an organization may find itself in (Seibel et al., 2023). As such,

adaptive leadership theory is most deeply rooted in complexity, transformational, and situational leadership theories (Cohocar, 2009; Seibel et al., 2023). Adaptive leadership theory's relationship with transformational leadership theory will be further discussed in Part Three of this series.

Rather than adhere to strict norms of processes, however, Heifetz et al. (2009a) describe adaptive leadership theory as one that is based on leadership adapting the organization's 'DNA.' The term in this context refers to the organization's values, processes and purpose, in order to thrive in uncertain environments. Commonly, adaptive leadership as a theory, when paired with adaptive-innovation theory provides a context for the individual problem-solving styles, either adaptive, by relying on structured processes, or innovative, through adept creative problem solving that often occurs independent of structured processes (Seibel et al., 2023). According to Seibel et al., individual leaders who are adaptive tend to be viewed as more traditional and systematic, preferring an existing structure within which to work within, while innovative individuals tend to be viewed as more freethinking, untethered to structure, and willing to break rules. This topic will be covered more in Part Two as it relates to working around traditional hierarchical structures and in adaptive teams such as Kotter's (2014) well-known dual operating system.

Seibel et al. (2023) point out that, between adaptive or innovative, organizational culture may tend to favor one style of problem-solving over the other. This begs the question, if, given adaptive-innovative leadership theory states that these two problem-solving styles are "independent of intelligence, process, motive, attitude, situation, culture, ethnicity, and learned skills" (p. 24) and are not malleable character traits of individual leaders, can adaptive-innovative leadership theory have an inherent ethical blind spot (Seibel et al., 2023)? More simply put, are innovative leaders more prone to unethical decision-making than adaptive leaders? Conversely, can adaptive leaders be so rigid in problem solving that they too are subject to ethical shortfalls? Neither scenario is ideal, and the discussion is reminiscent of Aristotle's Golden Mean with a virtuous action avoiding both the vice of deficiency and vice of extreme. The pros and cons of adaptive leadership theory will be explored at length beginning in the next of the publication in this series.

Moving from Past to Present

The world of adaptive leadership is broad due in part to its long history of development from the world of ethics. This series aims to build upon the roots of ethical leadership to support the expansion of adaptive leadership knowledge to also incorporate modern leadership-as-practice discourse. As the series advances, adaptive leadership's relationship with other theories and practical uses will continue to be explored. For this part, the authors conclude by providing Figure 1, a visual representation of the explorations that will relate back to the foundational roots of altruistic care, the pitfalls to be mindful of, and the dynamic nature of the practice.

Figure 1
Development of Modern Adaptive Leadership Theory



Note. Authors' illustration (2025).

References

- Abukalusa, K., & Oosthuizen, R. (2023). Organisational adaptive leadership framework through systems thinking. *South African Journal of Industrial Engineering*, 34(3), 245–257. <https://doi.org/10.7166/34-3-2955>
- Alibašić, H. (2024, August 7). Advancing disaster resilience: The ethical dimensions of adaptability and adaptive leadership in public service organizations. *Public Integrity*, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10999922.2024.2388285>
- Ambler, W. (2018). Aristotle. In R. W. Kolb (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of business Ethics and society*, 7, p. 160). SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483381503>
- Baker, J. (2018). Virtue ethics. In R. W. Kolb (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of business Ethics and society*, 7, pp. 3566-3572). SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483381503>

- Banks, G. C., Knapp, D. J., Lin, L., Sanders, C. S., & Grand, J. A. (2022). Ethical decision making in the 21st century: A useful framework for industrial-organizational psychologists. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology: Perspectives on Science and Practice*, 15(2), 220–235.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/iop.2021.143>
- Brown, M. E., & Mitchell, M. S. (2010). Ethical and unethical leadership: Exploring new avenues for future research. *Business Ethics Quarterly* 20(4), 583-616.
<https://doi.org/10.5840/beq201020439>
- Brown, M. E., & Treviño, L. K. (2006). Ethical leadership: A review and future directions. *Leadership Quarterly*, 17(6), 595-616. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2006.10.004>
- Burns, J. (2001). Complexity science and leadership in healthcare. *The Journal of Nursing Administration*, 31(10), 474-482.
<http://ovidsp.ovid.com/ovidweb.cgi?T=JS&PAGE=reference&D=ovfte&NEWS=N&AN=00005110-200110000-00011>
- Castro, E. (2024). Analysis of leadership failures, crises, and scandals in various sectors and contexts in Argentina. *International Journal of Leadership & Governance*, 4(1), 41–52.
<https://doi.org/10.47604/ijlg.2411/2794>
- Cojocar, B. (2009). Adaptive leadership: Leadership theory or theoretical derivative? *Academic Leadership: The Online Journal*, 7(1), Article 5. <http://doi.org/10.58809/KMLY5598>
- Davidson, F. D., & Hughes, T. R. (2020). Moral dimensions of leadership. *Oxford research encyclopedia of education*. Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.785>
- Dion M. (2012). Are ethical theories relevant for ethical leadership? *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 33(1), 4-24.
- Engelke, C.F., & Swegan, R.B. (2024). *The practice of ethical leadership: Insights from psychology and business in building an ethical bottom line* (1st ed.). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/b23260>
- Ferrero, I., Rocchi, M., Pellegrini, M. M., & Reichert, E. (2020). Practical wisdom: A virtue for leaders. Bringing together Aquinas and authentic leadership. *Business Ethics: A European Review*, 29, 84-98. <https://doi.org/10.1111/beer.12298>

- Girado-Sierra, D., Gallego-Ortiz, O., & Thoene, U. (2024, July 2024). Aristotelian versus Platonic and Machiavellian interpretations of phronesis: A critical reflection on leadership and management education. *International Social Science Journal*. Advance online publication.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/issj.12527>
- Gohl, C. (2024). Reimagining business ethics as ethos-driven practice: A Deweyan perspective. *Journal of Human Values*, 30(1), 75-90. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09716858231223680>
- Hamelink, C. J. (2015). *Global communication*. Sage.
- Heifetz, R., Grashow, A., & Linsky, M. (2009a). *The theory behind the practice: A brief introduction to the adaptive leadership framework*. Harvard Business Press.
- Heifetz, R., Linsky, M., & Grashow, A. (2009b). *The practice of adaptive leadership: Tools and tactics for changing your organization and the world*. Harvard Business Press.
- Hofstede, G. (1998). Think locally, act globally: Cultural constraints in personnel management. *Management and International Review*, 38, 7–26.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-322-90989-3_2
- Jansen, M. (2023). Spillover effects of the opioid epidemic on consumer finance. *Journal of Financial and Quantitative Analysis*, 58(6), 2365–2386. <http://doi.org/10.1017/S0022109022001399>
- Johnson, C. E. (2025). In C. E. Johnson (Ed.), *Meeting the ethical challenges of leadership: Casting light or Shadow* (8th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Keefe, P. R. (2017, October 23). The family that built an empire of pain: The Sackler dynasty's ruthless marketing of painkillers has generated billions of dollars—and millions of addicts. *The New Yorker*. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/10/30/the-family-that-built-an-empire-of-pain>
- Kotter, J. P. (2014). *Accelerate: Building strategic agility for a faster moving world*. Harvard Business Review Press.
- Lange, S. E. (2015) *Global leadership effectiveness: The predictive value of cognitively oriented competencies* [Master's thesis, San Jose State University]. San Jose State University ScholarWorks. <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.xgsg-2j2r>
- Levine, M.P., Boaks, J. (2014). What does ethics have to do with leadership? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 124, 225–242. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-013-1807-y>

- Lovett, S. L., & Woolard, N. A. (2016). The toolkit and the carpenter: Teaching the critical distinction between business ethics and personal morals. *E-Journal of Business Education and Scholarship of Teaching*, 10(2), 35–46. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1167338>
- Ly, Nhung-Binh. (2020). Cultural influences on leadership: Western-dominated leadership and non-western conceptualizations of leadership. *Sociology and Anthropology*, 8(1), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.13189/sa.2020.080101>
- McIntire, A., Calvert, I., & Ashcraft, J. (2024). Pressure to plagiarize and the choice to cheat: Toward a pragmatic reframing of the ethics of academic integrity. *Education Sciences*, 14(3). <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14030244>
- Melanson, S. (2023). Evaluating nondebtor releases: How Purdue Pharma emphasizes the need for congress to resolve the decades-long debate. *Connecticut Law Review*, 577(1). https://digitalcommons.lib.uconn.edu/law_review/577/
- Meyer, E. (2014). *The culture map: Breaking through the invisible boundaries of global business*. PublicAffairs.
- Mohi Ud Din, Q., & Zhang, L. (2023). Unveiling the mechanisms through which leader integrity shapes ethical leadership behavior: Theory of planned behavior perspective. *Behavioral Sciences*, 13(11), 928. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs13110928>
- Niemiec, R. M. (2019). Finding the golden mean: The overuse, underuse, and optimal use of character strengths. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 32(3–4), 453–471. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09515070.2019.1617674>
- Noble, A. (2021). Fostering character development through adaptive leadership. *Journal of Character Education*, 17(2), 1–12. <https://doi.org/https://www.infoagepub.com/products/journal-of-character-education-vol-17-2>
- Northouse, P. G. (2022). *Leadership: Theory and practice*. SAGE.
- Nöthel, S., Nübold, A., Uitdewilligen, S., Schepers, J., & Hülshager, U. (2023). Development and validation of the adaptive leadership behavior scale (ALBS). *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14(1). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1149371>
- Olley, R. (2021). A focussed literature review of power and influence leadership theories. *Asia Pacific Journal of Health Management*, 16(2). <https://doi.org/10.24083/apjhm.v16i2.807>

- Okpo, O. (2023). Consequences, duties and virtues: A threefold normative ethical approach to professional ethics. *Aquino Journal of Philosophy*, 3(1).
<https://www.nigerianjournalsonline.com/index.php/AJOP/article/view/3409>
- Poff, D. C. (2007). Duties owed in serving students: The importance of teaching moral reasoning and theories of ethical leadership in educating business students. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, 5(1), 25–31. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10805-007-9040-x>
- Poppi, F. I. M. (2024). Abyssus abyssum invocat: Victim/criminal dynamics in the construction of successful criminal identities. *Deviant Behavior*, 1–17.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2024.2381070>
- Raelin, J. (Ed.). (2016, February 10). *Leadership-as-practice: Theory and application* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315684123>
- Rahaman, H. M. S., Stouten, J., & Guo, L. (2019). Antecedents of ethical leadership: The theory of planned behavior. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 40(6), 735–746.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/LODJ-11-2018-0417>
- Robinson, K., McKenna, B., & Rooney, D. (2022). The relationship of risk to rules, values, virtues, and moral complexity: What we can learn from the moral struggles of military leaders. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 179(3), 749–766. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-021-04874-5>
- Seibel, M., Kaufman, E. K., Cletzer, D. A., & Elliott-Engel, J. (2023). Advancing adaptive leadership through adaption-innovation theory: Enhancements to the holding environment. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 17(1), 23–29. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.21841>
- Sison, A. (2018). Virtue and leadership. In R. W. Kolb (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Business Ethics and Society*, 7, pp. 3562-3565). SAGE Publications.
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483381503>
- Solinger, O. N., Jansen, P. G. W., & Cornelissen, J. P. (2020). The emergence of moral leadership. *Academy of Management Review*, 45(3), 504–527. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2016.0263>
- Strachan, B. T. (2022). Duped by dope: The Sackler family's attempt to escape opioid liability and the need to close the non-debtor release loophole. *University of Richmond Law Review*, 57, 1031.
<https://scholarship.richmond.edu/lawreview/vol57/iss3/9>

- Sułkowski, Ł., Dacko-Pikiewicz, Z., & Szczepańska-Woszczyzna, K. (2024). *Philosophy and leadership: An evolution of leadership from ancient times to the digital age*. Routledge.
<http://doi.org/10.4324/9781003490470>
- Tanz, L., Gladden, R., & Dinwiddie A. (2024) Routes of drug use among drug overdose deaths — United States, 2020–2022. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 73(6), 124-130.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7306a2>
- Throop W, & Mayberry M. (2017, June 1). Leadership for the sustainability transition. *Business and Society Review*, 122(2), p. 221. <http://doi.org/10.1111/basr.12116>.
- U.S. Center for Disease Control (2024, April 5). *Understanding the opioid overdose epidemic*.
<https://www.cdc.gov/overdose-prevention/about/understanding-the-opioid-overdose-epidemic.html>
- Vance, G. (2023). Sackler immunity: Problems surrounding nondebtor releases in Chapter 11 bankruptcy. *University of California at Davis Business Law School*, 23(1), 93-133.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4002743>
- Wagner, I. A. (2023). Ethical theories as multiple models. *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 49(6), 444–446.
<https://doi.org/10.1136/jme-2022-108501>
- Western Governors University. (2020). What is ethical leadership? Western Governors University.
Retrieved from <https://www.wgu.edu/blog/what-is-ethical-leadership2001.html>
- Winkler, E.A. Are universal ethics necessary? And possible? A systematic theory of universal ethics and a code for global moral education. *SN Soc Sci* 2, 66 (2022).
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s43545-022-00350-7>

About the authors



Eric L. Hubbard is an assistant professor and Director of MLD/MBA/MHA programs at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College (SMWC), where he teaches in the Division of Business and Leadership. Eric earned a Ph.D. in I/O Psychology from NU/NCU, an MLD from SMWC and Pro. Aeronautics w/Business Minor from ERAU. Eric serves as Ethicist and Lead Qualitative Researcher for the PARC Project. Eric's research interests include human factors, well-being, leadership, ethics, and morality. Eric enjoys his family as well as plants and nature, astronomy, archaeology, art and music.



Lisa S. Thatcher's current work with Indiana University's Center for Evaluation, Policy, & Research (CEPR) positions her to have frequent collaboration with universities, governmental agencies, and global foundations to conduct social and behavioral sciences research along with both policy and program evaluations for data-driven decision-making. Ms. Thatcher incorporates her all-ages history museum educator past with her anthropology background to contextualize her work inside of socio-cultural constructs. She focused on LGBTQ+ HR policy change during her Master's in Leadership Development and is currently pursuing her PhD in Global Leadership by examining the dynamics of restorative justice in organizational leadership and development. Although her dissertation work is set to take a critical theory interpretivist phenomenological qualitative approach, she often works with quantitative quasi-experimental design through CEPR.



Kourtney Barrett earned a Bachelor of Science in Public Relations in 2006 and a Master's in Education in 2008, pivoting from a corporate path to higher education inspired by her student leadership experiences. She spent 15 years in higher education law, student conduct, and Title IX compliance, holding roles such as Associate Director for Student Conduct and Deputy Title IX Coordinator at Indiana State University.

In 2022, Kourtney transitioned to Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, where she serves as Leadership Program Specialist, adjunct faculty in the Master's in Leadership Development Program, and instructor in Business and Leadership studies.

Acknowledgments: Collectively the authors would like to thank our families, friends, colleagues, and peers who have supported our work through unconditional patience and encouragement. We would also like to acknowledge those who have served to motivate, and even inspire us as we seek to flourish as scholars. The true credit for this work belongs to each of you.

GLI classification: (89)

Paper type: Research article

Received: October 22, 2024, **Accepted:** November 3, 2024