

# Similarities Between Emotional Intelligence and Servant Leadership

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This article examines the four factor concept of emotional intelligence (EI) as defined by Mayer and Salovey (1997) and compares each of these four factors: (a) the ability to appraise and express emotion; (b) the use of emotion to enhance cognitive processes and decision making; (c) the ability to understand and analyze emotions; and (d) the reflective regulation of emotion with the five servant leadership models of Page and Wong (2000), Patterson (2003), Russell and Stone (2002), Sendjaya and Sarros (2002), and Winston's SL Model (2003). The article shows strong ties between the EI factors of (a) the ability to appraise and express emotion, (b) the use of emotion to enhance cognitive processes and decision making, and (d) the reflective regulation of emotion, but not much connection with (c) the ability to understand and analyze emotions. This reduced level of application for the third EI factor leads to a conclusion that more research into the ontology of servant leaders may be warranted.

Since Farling, Stone, and Winston's (1999) call for empirical research in the study of servant leadership, the literature has grown with the significant additions of Laub's (1999) work to define and measure a servant-led organization, Page and Wong's (2000) effort to build an instrument to measure a leader's degree of servant leadership, as well as Sendjaya and Sarros' (2003) effort to build an instrument to measure the presence of servant leadership. Russell and Stone's (2002) model of servant leadership and Bass' (2000) comparison of transformational leadership with servant leadership has helped frame theoretical considerations. Subsequent theoretical work by Patterson (2003), Bryant (2003), Nelson (2003), Dillman (2002), Winston (2003, in press-a), as well as Dennis' (2003) effort to build an instrument from this collection of theoretical studies, have helped clarify the concept of servant leadership. The recent proliferation of studies on servant leadership has helped clarify what servant leadership is and how it works, but greater clarity can still occur. This article purposes to show the similarities between emotional intelligence and servant leadership as a means of further clarifying what servant leadership is.

While emotional intelligence was popularized by Goleman (1995), it was Salovey and Mayer's (1990) followed by Mayer and Salovey's (1997) work on emotional intelligence that provided a clearer definition for use in research and leadership development, thus, this article uses Salovey and Mayer's definition rather than Goleman's. Mayer and Salovey posited that emotional intelligence has four constructs: (a) the ability to appraise and express emotion, (b) the use of emotion to enhance cognitive processes and decision making, (c) the ability to understand and analyze emotions, and (d) the reflective regulation of emotion. The application and usefulness of each of these four constructs to servant leadership lies in the outcomes of the four constructs that describe leader-follower relationship behavior: (a) affect-based trust, (b) empathy, (c) altruism, (d) commitment, (e) caring and concerned behaviors, (f) openness, and (g) responsiveness. This article

presents each of these seven leader-follower relational behaviors and shows the tie to Mayer and Salovey's four emotional intelligence factors, as well as the servant leadership models of Farling et al. (1999), Russell and Stone (2002), Patterson (2003), Page and Wong (2000), Sendjaya and Sarros (2003), and Winston (2003). The value of this article is the recognition of the similarities and overlap of the four emotional intelligence constructs with servant leadership, presented in the next sections and summarized in Table 1. This recognition may help future researchers build accurate measures of servant leadership and may help consultants and trainers incorporate emotional intelligence constructs into servant leadership development projects.

### **The Ability to Appraise and Express Emotion**

The ability to appraise and express emotion is defined by Salovey and Mayer (1990) as an individual's ability to sense and acknowledge their own and other's emotions and to express appropriate emotions at the appropriate times. According to Rapisarda (2002), the person (leader) who can sense the emotions and feelings of others is more successful in developing emotional bonds than the person (leader) who cannot do this. This seems to fit well with Page and Wong's (2000) concept of caring for others. The establishment of emotional bonds is part of Winston's (2003) construct of "commitment to the leader" that develops from the follower's loving relationship with the leader. It is worth noting that "love" here refers to the Greek concept of *agapao* love expressed as a moral love that is the basis for strong friendship and relationships, but should not be confused with marital, familial, or erotic forms of love.

The idea of a leader appraising and expressing emotion is consistent with the transformational leadership idea of individual consideration in which leaders vary their communication and behavior to the specific needs of each follower. Stone, Russell, and Patterson (2003) presented the servant leadership construct of "appreciating others" in their effort to compare and contrast servant leadership with transformational leadership, and cited Avolio and Bass's (2002) contention that the transformational leader disburses *personal attention* to followers based on the individual follower's needs for achievement and growth as support for the construct of "appreciating others." Combining this with Konovsky and Pugh's (1994) contention that employees who perceive that the leader cares for and is concerned about their feelings and needs, may result in the employees defining their relationships with the leader and the organization as one of social exchange, seems to logically support the notion that leaders who are able to appraise the emotions of a follower should be able to establish relationships in which employees are more committed to the leader.

From work on normative and affective commitment by Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman, (1995) and McAlister (1995), we understand that employees with high levels of normative and affective commitment demonstrate higher levels of performance and are more diligent in their work. Sendjaya's (2003) concept of authentic self relates to the Mayer and Salovey's (1997) concept of expressing emotion if the leader is expressing authentic emotion. Sendjaya points out that the authentic self includes vulnerability that seems to tie to the leader's willingness to express emotion.

### **The Use of Emotion to Enhance Cognitive Processes and Decision Making**

According to Mayer and Salovey (1997), leaders who use emotion to enhance cognitive processes and decision making, use behaviors such as (a) enthusiasm, (b) optimism, (c) curiosity, (d) openness to new ideas, and (e) being responsive to self and others. Adding to the understanding of the use of emotion, Cooper and Sawaf (1996) posit that these leader-behaviors are antecedents to followers trusting the leader in that followers observe and interpret the behaviors and ascribe or attribute the behaviors as indicative of fairness, consistency, and appropriateness. These five behaviors identified by Mayer and Salovey, as well as the attribution proposed by Cooper and Sawaf, tie to (a) Page and Wong's (2000) factor of integrity; (b) Patterson's (2003) factors of altruism, trust, and service to the follower; (c) Russell and Stone's (2002) factors of trust, integrity, and credibility; (d) Sendjaya and Sarros' (2002) factors of equality and trust; and (e) Winston's factors of altruism, commitment to the leader, and service to the leader.

Although Page and Wong (2000) include integrity as an element of the servant leadership character-orientation, the two authors do not define integrity. Patterson (2003) defined altruism as "helping others just

for the sake of helping” (p. 5) and a concern for others (p. 5). Furthermore, Patterson posits that servant leaders seek radical equality for all people, which ties well to Cooper and Sawaf’s (1996) proposition that followers ascribe fairness, consistency, and appropriateness to the leader’s behavior. Patterson defines trust as a combination of respect, goodwill, harmony, everyone having a voice, truth-telling, and credibility. These aspects of trust also seem to tie to Cooper and Sawaf’s proposition. Finally, from Patterson’s view, service is defined as the leader’s personal involvement, responsibility to others, celebration of the followers’ uniqueness, and unleashing creativity in others. These aspects of service seem to tie to Cooper and Sawaf’s idea of appropriateness. Sitter (2004), while not writing in support of Patterson’s model, does make a contribution to the links found between emotional intelligence by inferring that those leaders who are considerate, kind, and accurately perceive the needs and feelings of their followers find that their employees respond with increased levels of altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, and conscientiousness.

Russell and Stone (2002) define trust as the willingness of the leader to be vulnerable to others while believing that others will act in positive ways to the leader. Russell and Stone go on to say that trust occurs as leaders show concern for others and act in honest ways. This seems to tie well to Mayer and Salovey’s (1997) concept of being responsive to self and others. Russell and Stone tie trust to integrity and define integrity as being nearly synonymous with honesty but that integrity refers more to a moral code. This consideration of integrity as morality relates well to Mayer and Salovey’s idea of responsiveness to others and Cooper and Sawaf’s (1996) concept of appropriateness. Finally, Russell and Stone define credibility as the quality of the leader to elicit belief, which seems to tie well to Mayer and Salovey’s concepts of openness to new ideas and responsiveness, as well as Cooper and Sawaf’s fairness and consistency.

Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) and Sendjaya (2003) define equality as the leader treating people in the organization as equal partners. Although the definition is not discussed in much detail by Sendjaya, he includes the concept of equality within his servant leadership domain or covenantal relationships that seems to tie well to Mayer and Salovey’s (1997) concept of being responsive to others. In a similar manner, Sendjaya’s use of trust seems to fit well with Cooper and Sawaf’s (1996) notion that the use of emotion results in antecedent behaviors leading to trust.

Winston’s (2003) model includes the construct of altruism that ties well with Mayer and Salovey’s (1997) idea of being responsive to others and enthusiastic. Winston defines altruism in much the same way as Patterson (2003) in that the leader is focused more on the follower than on the organization. Winston contrasts commitment to the leader with organizational commitment and posits that commitment to the leader is more in line with personal loyalty than with a sense of belonging to the organization. Of the three factors of commitment posited by Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993)—(a) affective, (b) normative, and (c) continuance—it is affective commitment that occurs in the servant leader/follower relationship. Winston’s proposition is that commitment to the leader contributes to the follower’s desire to serve the leader, which also ties back to Mayer and Salovey’s idea of being responsive to others but from the follower’s view.

The notion of the use of emotion in decision making is supported by Winston’s (in press-b) concept of *nomos* as a conceptual framework for decision making. *Nomos* alludes to the notion that decisions can be made based on the organization’s formal rules or edicts, or that a person can make a decision using logic and reason to determine the correct action, or that a person may use love to determine a correct action or course of behavior. This ties well with Mayer and Salovey’s (1997) contention that emotional intelligence includes the use of emotion in cognitive processes and decision making, and is shown in Table 1 along with factors from the other servant leadership models that relate to this emotional intelligence concept.

### **The Ability to Understand and Analyze Emotions**

According to Mayer and Salovey (1997), the ability to understand and analyze emotions results in leaders understanding the causes and consequences of emotions. This ability by servant leaders would seem to be two-dimensional in that the leaders should be able to understand the cause of their own emotions as well as the emotions of the followers. Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) contribute to the understanding of this concept by positing that only when they know the cause of their emotion can leaders manage their feelings. Mayer and Salovey indicate that emotions emerge as patterned chains of events, and generally move through an emotional sequence. For example, “[A]nger may intensify to rage, be expressed, and then transform to

satisfaction or guilt, depending upon the circumstance” (p. 14). Thus, the servant leader, knowing the cause and consequences of emotions—whether the leader’s own emotions or those of the follower—may be more adept at shaping long-term behavior and affect-based commitment with followers.

This notion of knowing the cause and consequences of emotions does not seem to fit the specific factors presented in the five servant leadership models considered in this paper. But it does seem to fit the general ontological view of a servant leader being transparent and knowing “self” before serving “others” that seems to occur in all five models. The five models focus on how leaders interact with followers, which leads to a possible conclusion that more research on the ontology of the servant leader may be helpful.

Page and Wong (2000) and Wong (2003) imply that a servant leader is authentic, thus it seems that knowing the cause and consequence of emotions would fit this concept. Both Patterson (2003) and Winston (2003) use the concept of *agapao* love in their models, and although *agapao* does not refer directly to the person understanding self, there is some overlap in the concept in that people have to be aware of themselves before they can comprehend and live out the ideals of *agapao* love.

Russell and Stone’s (2002) framework of servant leadership does not address the ontological notion of knowing “self,” although they do refer to the leader engaging in internal self-change that seems compatible with the notion of understanding the cause and consequence of emotions. Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) come closest to focusing on the ontological aspects of leaders knowing “self” by presenting the ideas of self-awareness and self-perception on the part of the leader. However, Sendjaya (2003) does not specifically address the ideas of self-awareness and self-perception in his servant leadership instrument.

While it seems that the five servant leadership models under study in this article have limited ties to the notion of understanding the causes and consequences of emotion, it may be beneficial for additional research in the area of servant leader ontology as a means of more fully comprehending the servant leader concept.

### **The Reflective Regulation of Emotion**

According to Salovey and Mayer (1990), reflective regulation of emotion is a logical progression for understanding the cause and consequence of emotion, and implies that leaders actively manage their own emotions as well as the emotions of their followers. They argue that representative behaviors include honesty, respect, inspirational motivation, and suppression of negative communications. Goleman et al. (2002) endorse this idea and posit that the leader, using coaching and affiliation behaviors, actively manages the emotions and subsequent behaviors of the followers. Presuming that the servant leader is virtuous, as Patterson (2003) posits, and is engaged in *agapao* love as both Patterson and Winston (2003) posit, it is likely that the servant leader’s intent in the reflective regulation of emotion is to actively manage others’ impression of the leader in order that the true feelings and intents of the leader be known, rather than as a means of negative manipulation.

The notion of reflective regulation of emotion ties well to the behavioral factors of the five models addressed in this paper. Specifically, regulation ties well with Page and Wong’s (2000) factors of visioning, goal-setting, leading, modeling, team-building, and decision making. Although Page and Wong do not clearly define these six factors, they do refer to the actions of the leader in conveying a shared vision through team-building by the use of modeling behaviors (p. 78).

Patterson’s (2003) model incorporates the notion of proactive regulation of emotion in the leader’s actions through her model’s factors of vision, trust, empowerment, and service. In Patterson’s model, vision is a process by which the servant leader learns about the follower’s vision for the organization and proactively seeks to find ways in which the follower can engage in the activities that both benefit the follower and the organization. Patterson presents trust as an active process intertwined with goal-setting, self-efficacy, and empowerment in that the leader. Working with the follower, the leader gives subsequently larger goals and resources as the follower demonstrates success and builds confidence in order to take on larger goals.

Russell and Stone (2002) show use of the emotional intelligence factor of proactive regulation of emotion through their model’s factors of persuasion, influence, service, modeling, pioneering, appreciation of others, and empowerment. They dichotomize the factors of persuasion, conceptualization, and building community as accompanying attributes, and they consider the factors of service, modeling, appreciation of others, and empowerment as functional attributes. According to Russell and Stone, “[F]unctional attributes are the operative qualities, characteristics, and distinctive features belonging to leaders and observed through specific leader behaviors in the workplace” (p. 146) and “[t]he accompanying attributes appear to supplement and augment the functional attributes. They are not secondary in nature; rather, they are complementary and, in some cases, prerequisites to effective servant leadership” (p. 146).

Sendjaya (2003) included the following items (sub-factors) in his instrument that appear to relate to the notion of proactive regulation of emotion: (a) vision, (b) trust, (c) role modeling, (d) empowerment, and (e) mentoring. Sendjaya’s five factors are items that he groups together under the heading of “Transforming Influence,” which implies a sense of proactive behavior on the part of the leader. Sendjaya does not define the items in detail, but does state that vision implies that the leader makes sure that followers have a clear understanding. He defines trust as the followers feeling comfortable that the leader allows the followers to express themselves. Sendjaya defines role modeling as leading by personal example. Empowerment, to Sendjaya, represents the leader allowing the follower to experiment and to be creative without fear. The leader, Sendjaya posits, uses mentoring to provide the follower with candid feedback about performance.

Winston’s (2003) model focuses on the follower-to-leader variables and thus, considers how the follower, rather than the leader, uses proactive regulation of emotion to shape behavior. In Winston’s model, only the service factor fits the notion of proactive regulation of emotion. Service in Winston’s model represents the specific follower-behaviors that result from commitment to the leader, self-efficacy, and altruism. Table 1 shows the application of proactive regulation of emotion to the five servant leadership models included in this article.

**Summative Comments**

In summary, there appears to be relative application of emotional intelligence to the servant leadership concept, although it is not clear if emotional intelligence is specifically tied to servant leadership or just leadership in general. The amount of similarity warrants researchers and leadership development practitioners to consider the role of emotional intelligence in servant leadership. In addition, the inability to show clear application of the understanding and analyzing of emotions to the five servant leadership models implies that there may be value in examining the ontology of servant leaders to determine if this emotional intelligence factor applies or if servant leaders have an ontological framework different from leaders in general.

Table 1.  
*The relationship of EI constructs with constructs of servant leadership models.*

EI Construct	Page and Wong’s SL Model (2000)	Patterson’s SL Model (2003)	Russell and Stone’s SL Model (2002)	Sendjaya and Sarros’ SL Model (2002)	Winston’s SL Model (2003)
Appraise and express emotion	Caring for others	Trust	Trust	Authentic self	Commitment to the leader
Use emotion to enhance cognitive processes	Integrity	Altruism	Trust	Equality	Trust
Understand and analyze emotions	Authentic	Trust	Integrity	Trust	Altruism
Reflective regulation	Visioning Goal-	Service to the follower	Credibility	Self-awareness	Commitment to the leader
		Agapao Humility	Internal self-change	Self-perception	Service to the leader
		Vision	Persuasion	Vision	Agapao
		Trust	Influence	Trust	Service

of emotion	setting Leading Modeling Team- building Decision- making	Empowerment Service	Service Modeling Pioneering Appreciation of others Empowerment.	Role modeling Empowerment Mentoring.
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