

SERVANT LEADERSHIP FROM THE STUDENT OFFICER PERSPECTIVE IN PHI THETA

KAPPA

By

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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Capella University

May 2007

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## Abstract

Phi Theta Kappa is the international honor society of the associate degree granting colleges. There are over 1100 chapters worldwide, consisting of approximately 200,000 active members at any given time. The mission of Phi Theta Kappa is to recognize and encourage scholarship among two-year college students by providing leadership and service opportunities. Phi Theta Kappa is like many academic honor societies, in that the ongoing leadership is widely provided by volunteers. Within Society publications, the concept of servant-leadership is stressed, yet very little is known about the level of servant-leadership found within the organization. Utilizing the Organizational Leadership Assessment Inventory, developed by Dr. James Laub, servant-leadership behaviors will be assessed by the student officer population of the Society.

## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, John Merideth, who has always seen my successes before I could ever consider the possibilities, and in loving memory to my father, George Brody, who always told me that an education is the only thing that cannot be taken away. These two men greatly shaped who I have become. Forever, thanks.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my mentor, Dr. Samuel Natale for his guidance and support throughout this process. He encouraged to me explore issues from my own perspective, while ensuring that I looked beyond my current field of vision. I would also like to thank Dr. Valerie Coxon, one of my committee members, for her ever-present sense of humor and dedicated support especially when I needed a fresh pair of eyes to understand the best ways to use statistics to explain what I was finding. I thank Dr. Peter Davis, also of my committee for looking at this work with a different perspective than I was used to. His unique style ensured that I answered needed questions thoroughly.

I would be remiss if I did not take the time to thank my family. My husband, John always knew that I would be successful academically. He gave me the support, time and resources to make sure that I had what I needed. His never-ending patience ensured that I finished this program with the same marriage that I started it with. I thank my daughters, Laura and Michelle for putting up with a mom that spent hours upon hours locked away in a study. I thank my mother; Jacquie Lammers for her encouragement and amazement at seeing her dreams for me become a reality. I thank my father, George Brody, who passed away shortly before this was completed. He always stressed the importance of an education and supported me in various ways throughout my entire academic journey.

I thank my friends, who understood when I was unable to participate in activities because of the needs that my work required. They stood by and encouraged me in different ways, from little notes just saying hi, to listening to me theorize and complain about the stresses I faced. To all these people, part of why I am here is because of you. Thank you all.

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

### A Brief Overview of Phi Theta Kappa and the Importance of Servant Leadership in the Society

Phi Theta Kappa (the Society) is the international honor society of the two-year college (“About Phi Theta Kappa,” n.d., ¶ 2). Its “mission is two-fold: 1) recognize and encourage the academic achievement of two-year college students and (2) provide opportunities for individual growth and development through participation in honors, leadership, service and fellowship programming” (“About Phi Theta Kappa,” n.d., ¶ 2). In order to accomplish these missions, chapters are organized at individual colleges, and are run by college faculty or staff members, who for the most part are volunteers in Phi Theta Kappa. Advisors are to be supportive individuals, who create leadership and scholarship opportunities to develop the college student for the college student’s personal growth.

Phi Theta Kappa inducts over 100,000 members annually, and has over 2 million active and alumni members, in approximately 1,200 chapters worldwide (“About Phi Theta Kappa,” n.d.). Individual chapters are associated with other chapters in regions, and regions are then joined together in divisions. Currently, there are 29 regions and four divisions in the organization (“About Phi Theta Kappa,” n.d.).

Throughout the Society, the concept of servant leadership is stressed. Servant leadership is a term coined by Robert K. Greenleaf in 1970 (Greenleaf, 1991) and based on his philosophy that leaders should first be servants. Greenleaf indicated that servant leaders are concerned with the highest priority needs of the followers before the leader’s own needs (Greenleaf, 1991). Greenleaf indicated that the way to determine if one is a servant leader is to ask if the followers “grow as persons” (Greenleaf, 1991, p. 7) while being served by the leader. Greenleaf was

particularly concerned with the idea that followers should be developed as persons, and develop the desire to become servant leaders themselves (Greenleaf, 1991). This was of particular importance to him, as he believed that followers “will freely respond only to individuals who are chosen as leaders because they are proven and trusted as servants” (Greenleaf, 1991, p. 4).

Phi Theta Kappa has developed a Leadership Development Studies program, which is designed to include film, readings and experiential exercises to help develop leadership abilities in both students and volunteer advisors (“Phi Theta Kappa Leadership Development Studies [Leadership Development],” n.d.). Among the practical aspects of the program, an entire section is dedicated to servant leadership (“Leadership Development,” n.d.). This unit is devoted to the concepts surrounding servant leadership, which includes some of Robert K. Greenleaf’s writings, as well as excerpts from *Journey to the East* by Hermann Hesse, and a profile of Harriet Tubman (“Leadership Development,” n.d.). While this program has a registration fee of over \$1400, for a three-day program, “over 1,800 educators from over 500 institutions around the world have participated” (“Leadership Development,” n.d.) since 1992.

Phi Theta Kappa stresses the concepts of servant leadership through its many publications as well. One example is in the 2006-08 Chapter Resource Manual. In the section that discusses advisor duties, it is emphasized that “for the most part, chapter officers should be allowed to perform their duties and make mistakes along the way, learning to resolve them on their own” (*Phi Theta Kappa Chapter Resource Manual [Chapter Manual]*, 2006, p. 6). The growth enhancing strategy follows Greenleaf’s words, as he wrote about making sure that followers’ higher order needs were taken care of by the servant leader (Greenleaf, 2002). Greenleaf indicated that one can recognize a servant leader by looking at the followers, as he wrote, “Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more

autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants” (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 27)? The ties between the mission of Phi Theta Kappa and the concepts covered under the term *servant leader* seem clear.

### A Background to Phi Theta Kappa

The purpose of Phi Theta Kappa shall be to recognize and encourage scholarship among two-year college students. To achieve this purpose, Phi Theta Kappa shall provide opportunity for the development of leadership and service, for an intellectual climate for exchange of ideas and ideals, for lively fellowship for scholars, and for stimulation of interest in continuing academic excellence (*Chapter Manual*, 2006, p. 1).

This brief paragraph explicitly states the reason Phi Theta Kappa exists. The organization was first founded in 1918 by a group of two-year college presidents in the state of Missouri, and was modeled after Phi Beta Kappa, an honor society at the bachelor-degree level (*Chapter Manual*, 2006). The Society has grown throughout the years to include more than 2 million active and alumni members in the “United States, U.S. territories, Canada, Germany, British Virgin Islands and the Pacific Rim” (*Chapter Manual*, 2006, p. 1), and is headquartered out of Jackson, Mississippi. Early on, the Society’s membership was an honor bestowed upon students at graduation, but it has evolved to offer a variety of programs that chapters are encouraged to participate in. The Society offers an Honors Study Topic, which is currently titled, *Gold, Gods and Glory: The Global Dynamics of Power*. Chapters are encouraged to participate in a satellite seminar series that is dedicated to exploring the Honors Study Topic, as well as to develop unique programs at individual colleges to help students understand the dynamic relationship of the topic in society, and to participate in an Honors Case Study Challenge, co-sponsored by USA

Today (*Chapter Manual*, 2006). The Society also encourages participation in the Civic Engagement Program, which is described as “a way of framing Phi Theta Kappa’s programs—an umbrella under which many Phi Theta Kappa programs fall” (*Chapter Manual*, 2006, p. 44). The current Civic Engagement Program is titled, Operation Green: Improving Our Communities (*Chapter Manual*, 2006). Other programs encouraged by Phi Theta Kappa, include the American Cancer Society’s Relay for Life; the Community College Readership Program, which is designed to encourage students to become aware of current events; the Voice Your Vote program, designed to encourage students to participate in government elections; and Project Graduation, which has the catch phrase, *feed a body, feed a mind*. Participation in Project Graduation involves collecting canned goods and books for the homeless (*Chapter Manual*, 2006).

Besides offering students multiple opportunities to become involved in their local communities, Phi Theta Kappa offers recognition programs and scholarship programs. Recognition programs include award ceremonies at both the regional and international levels, as well as certificates of participation for the different programs (*Chapter Manual*, 2006). Some of the scholarship programs include 20 \$2,500 scholarships in the First Team members for the All-USA Academic Team, which is co-sponsored by USA Today; 20 \$5,000 Guistwhite Scholarships; and 30 \$1,000 Leaders of Promise Scholarships (“Scholarships,” n.d.). Along side of these Phi Theta Kappa sponsored scholarships; the Society maintains cooperative agreements with approximately 600 senior institutions that offer scholarships in various amounts to Phi Theta Kappans who transfer to these institutions (“Get Connected,” n.d.).

Students are offered a variety of leadership positions within the Society, and can chose to be a student officer at the chapter, regional or international level. Each level offers different responsibilities ranging from being the person who organizes a chapter activity, giving speeches

at different colleges throughout the Society, to presiding over international meetings (*Chapter Manual*, 2006).

These programs, scholarships, and leadership opportunities put servant leadership into practice at the two-year college level, and provides evidence that Phi Theta Kappa is built on a foundation of servant leadership, as each program is aimed at the further development and growth of the member students.

### The Current Situation

Phi Theta Kappa is organized by individual chapters at college campuses in several countries and territories (*Chapter Manual*, 2006). Once a chapter is granted a charter, it is the college administration's responsibility to select advisors, who oversee the chapter ("Chapter Operations," n.d.). While 17 percent of the advisors receive a stipend, and 13 percent receive time compensation for chapter activities, most advisors serve without any compensation from the college, although advisors must be employees of the institution where the chapter is located ("What Are My Duties as an Advisor?," n.d.).

Chapters are assigned into one of 29 regions throughout Phi Theta Kappa, and are overseen by regional coordinators. Coordinators must be chapter advisors, and have at least an annual appointment with the college where they serve as an advisor ("Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society Constitution [Constitution]," n.d.). Coordinators are to facilitate "the integral relationship among chapters in the region, between Headquarters and the chapters, and between Phi Theta Kappa and the two-year college" ("Constitution," n.d., ¶ V5).

Regions are affiliated into one of four divisions, and although these divisions have international student officers elected annually, they are supervised by the International

Headquarters' staff directly. The International Headquarters' staff also offers support and supervision for advisors, coordinators and other student officers. Currently, there are approximately 50 employees listed on the contact page for the Society, with specific departments for each major Society program, chapter and coordinator support, as well as departments to oversee the general business functions of the Society ("Phi Theta Kappa Headquarters' Directory," n.d.).

As described previously, Phi Theta Kappa offers a Leadership Development Studies program for student officers and advisors, at a cost of over \$1,400 for a three day program. Since 1992, over 1,800 individuals from over 500 institutions have attended this program ("Leadership Development," n.d., ¶11). Currently there are 2,729 advisors in the Society, and the average tenure for advisors is 4 years (West, personal communication, June 16, 2006). This would indicate that there could have been as many as 9555 different advisors in this 14-year time frame, which would mean that if all participants have been advisors, roughly 20 percent of advisors have taken the Leadership Development Studies program since 1992.

#### The Importance of Assessing Servant Leadership Behaviors in Phi Theta Kappa

Phi Theta Kappa has grown extensively since its inception in 1918, and much is offered in the way of leadership programs and opportunities throughout the Society. However, no empirical research has been done to assess whether servant leadership behaviors are perceived by the students in the Society. This is perhaps the only missing element in Phi Theta Kappa's mission of providing programming that helps develop college students for their future. Phi Theta Kappa's leadership, scholarship and recognition programs emphasize student development, not advisor or headquarter staff development. By mission and values, Phi Theta Kappa should have

advisor and staff leaders that are not concerned with their own egos and achievements, as much as these key people should be concerned with the students' development by being servant leaders (Shugart, 1999).

It is interesting to note that Phi Theta Kappa specifically serves the two-year college student population. In contemporary terms, these students are enrolled in associate degree programs, mostly at community colleges, although some chapters are at senior institutions where associate degrees are offered along with bachelor level and higher degrees. Sanford Shugart, Ph.D. (1999) wrote a brief document highlighting the philosophy of the community college leadership, when he was president of Valencia Community College. In this document, he noted, "College are organizations that tend to behave collectively a bit like organisms. They tend, therefore, to self-absorption" (p. 4). In explaining this idea of self-absorption, Shugart discussed how many colleges had begun selling education to students; much like a manufacturer would sell products to consumers. He indicated that the idea of selling education put a certain consumer type of responsibility on the student, which the student is ill-equipped to assume. Students lack the necessary information to be a truly informed consumer in the academic market (Shugart, 1999). This attempt at self-protective behavior might turn out to be harmful to the institution in the long-run, and become a self-destructive strategy. Shugart later wrote that the current students were the "first truly post-modern class of students" (Shugart, 1999, p. 6). Shugart recognized that contemporary students have different beliefs and values in regards to leadership, trust, and institutions, as well as one of their primary goals of attaining a sense of well-being (Shugart, 1999). Shugart's insights are similar to those expressed by Izzo and Withers, as they described the newest generations of workers as individuals who were brought up by dual income parents, and were looking for a balance in their lives (2001). This description also indicates that these

new workers needed their work to have value, their workplace to have a sense of community, and that they would experience a level of independence not experienced by previous generations of workers (Izzo & Withers, 2001).

Phi Theta Kappa understands the needs of this contemporary student population. The community college population is made up of multi-generational students. The average age of the newly inducted Phi Theta Kappa student is 29, although the age range is from 18 to 80 years old (“Phi Theta Kappa Today,” n.d.). Phi Theta Kappa members are therefore the traditional student who is attending college straight out of high school, working adults with families of their own, and retired senior citizens, who are going back to school to finally obtain the college education that was not available to them before. By the nature of the Society’s mission and purpose, servant leadership is a natural fit, and the programs offered by the Society are developed with servant leadership in mind. Phi Theta Kappa has included servant leadership in the guiding philosophy of the organization, integrates servant leadership in its programs, and offers training in servant leadership, all of which are steps recommended when implementing servant leadership concepts in a nonprofit organization (Carroll, 2005).

The need for servant leadership in an organization like Phi Theta Kappa is clear for those involved in the Society. The Society, like the community colleges that is partners with, are communities devoted to developing and serving the needs of the student, so that the student can become the talent of the future workplace. By embracing servant leadership, the Society and by default, the community college, is preparing the student population to become the next generation of leaders, leaders who value “the dignity and self-worth of all people and the principle that a leader’s power flows from those led” (Senge, 2004, p. 4). For those students

already in their working prime, and those who have moved beyond this, Phi Theta Kappa and the community colleges provides students with a new sense of self and self-worth.

The recognition programs in Phi Theta Kappa are built on individual chapter involvement in local communities. Awards are presented to chapters and individual who document exemplary service to others, such as in the Hallmark Awards program. The Hallmark Program mission statement is:

The Hallmark Awards Program, which reflects the scholarly ideals of Phi Theta Kappa, serves to recognize superior individual and chapter achievement in Society programs. In this program, chapters compete against one another. Participation encourages excellence, reflects fairness, recognizes quality, and leads to enhanced student, advisor, and chapter development (“Hallmark Awards Program,” n.d., ¶ 1).

Hallmark awards are given at multiple levels, including individual, chapter and regional awards. Although individuals and chapters are recognized, the award represents the accomplishments of that individual or chapter in their service to others. There are several categories of awards for chapter advisors, such as the Paragon Award, which recognizes outstanding advisors with less than five years of service, and the Distinguished Chapter Advisor award, which recognizes outstanding advisors with more than five years of service (“Hallmark Awards Program,” n.d.). Awards are based on nominations from Phi Theta Kappa members, college administrators and regional coordinators. These two awards require nominations that provide the staff at Phi Theta Kappa with valuable information about how advisors serve the members; however, there is no quantifiable evidence to support the level of servant leadership behaviors that is occurring at any given point. It is therefore this gap in mission and practice that this research hopes to close.

## The Significance of Phi Theta Kappa in Providing Leadership Training for the Community College Student

Senge indicated that there is a paradox in current learning (2004). He indicated that “to achieve transformational learning, we must suspend some basic notions—a frightening proposition for the ego” (2004, p. 5). He tied this transformational learning to another idea regarding the shift of organizations to become learning organizations. In his writing, it is interesting to note that he considered the “great leader myth” (2004, p. 4), as taking away responsibility from the individual, and that the trend towards the new learning organization puts the responsibility back on the individual (Senge, 2004, p. 4). This might be one of the more interesting features of how academia has changed as well, since previous generations were “taught that to succeed in business, we have to be controlling, tough, powerful, and detached” (Saunders, 1993, p. 6). This is vastly different than what is emphasized in servant leadership, as with this leadership concept there is a great “respect for the human spirit in the workplace” (Shugart, 1997, p. 237). As a large number of the next generation of leaders and workers are currently students in educational institutions, academia has a new philosophy to teach in order to prepare the workers for the enlightened workplace. Perhaps, academic institutions need help transforming themselves since “over the long term, these institutions, as well as business organizations, will behave in ways that preserve the organization, even at the expense of the clients they are supposed to serve” (Shugart, 1997, p. 238).

In a 1998 edition of the professional publication titled, *Renaissance Administrator*, Hasselbach wrote that “Educational institutions need to take the lead in responding to the ‘leadership gap,’ attempting to equip the next generation with the leadership skills and attitudes needed to face the problems of the information age” (1998, p. 3). This puts colleges and

universities in the front lines of giving workers the skills they need as both employees and leaders in the current and future organizations. However the organizations of colleges and universities may not be equipped to responsibly teach. Academic institutions “reward expertise and professionalism disproportionately, they fail to help leaders” (Hasselbach, 1998, p. 8). Phi Theta Kappa provides an avenue for community colleges to offer opportunities in line with the concepts of servant leadership.

Grothaus noted that teenagers lack confidence in their leadership ability, and indicated that a lack of leadership opportunities compound this problem (2004). These insecure teenagers have the opportunity to move on with their young adult years in colleges, where at least at the community college level, Phi Theta Kappa’s scholarship, leadership and servicing programs provide students with the practical experience needed to develop leadership abilities in students, while at the same time, encouraging the serving attitude of servant leadership.

Phi Theta Kappa is dependent on a network of chapter advisors, who for the most part, are volunteers, giving of their time and effort without financial incentives. A small percentage of advisors are given compensatory time (13%), or stipends (17%), however, these benefits are rare and it is not know if either is an adequate compensation for the work involved, or if they are merely token expressions of a college’s gratitude. Since advisors are assigned by the colleges’ administration, it is also not known how these positions are assigned. Phi Theta Kappa does not select advisors, the Society only can provide limited training opportunities through the Leadership Development Program, and recognize advisors who exemplify the mission and purpose of the organization through the Hallmark Awards programs. Since the average tenure of an advisor is approximately 4 years (West, personal communication, June 17, 2006), the quality of the typical advisor is transient at best.

If college faculty and staff seek out these positions in Phi Theta Kappa, one can only hope that they understand themselves well enough to have accurate insights into their own behaviors and attitudes and those of their students. Without this self-knowledge, it is difficult if not impossible to “be sensitive to others’ feelings, needs, and attitudes” (London, 2002, p. 27). Because individuals filter information about themselves to foster their self-image (London, 2002), it is not known if advisors are as proficient at behaving in accordance with the concepts of servant leadership as they might indicate if they were asked. Advisors may not truly understand the tenants of servant leadership, or may have an incorrect belief about how their behaviors are perceived by the students they are supposed to be serving.

#### Purpose of this Research

This current research is an exploratory, case study project to determine if servant leadership behaviors are perceived by the followers, in this case, the student officers throughout the Society. If the advisors and staff of Phi Theta Kappa were surveyed to find out if they believed that they embodied and practiced behaviors associated with servant leadership, then all that could be assessed would be their perceptions, which may or may not have any relevance to how their actions are perceived by the student officers. Because of this, servant leadership will be assessed by surveying the student officers themselves.

The Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA) instrument, developed by Dr. James Laub in 1998, will be used in this research. Dr. Laub developed this instrument in an effort to assess organizations on six areas of effective leadership (“Welcome to the Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA) & the OLA Group [OLA Group],” n.d.). Originally, Dr. Laub designed this instrument for his own doctorate dissertation, which examined servant leadership

in relationship to organizational health (“Dr. Jim Laub,” n.d.); however the instrument has been used in at least eight other doctoral dissertations (“Dissertations/Thesis,” n.d.). The instrument contains a section to measure perceptions from followers regarding people within the organization in general, managers/supervisors and top leadership, and how respondents view their personal role in the organization. For this research, managers/supervisors and top leadership will be identified as advisors and regional coordinators, and the general workforce will be identified as peers within the respondents’ region. A separate section requesting demographic information will be included, so that trends might be discovered.

The interesting part of this research is that while there is current research investigating servant leadership in a variety of settings, nothing has been done with college honor societies. It is hoped that by researching servant leadership in Phi Theta Kappa, new insights into the practice of servant leadership can be ascertained, which can assist Phi Theta Kappa in its efforts to emphasize this leadership style, as well as to add new information to the body of knowledge currently available regarding servant leadership in general.

### Rationale for This Study

Several recent dissertations have used the OLA to study servant leadership. Some of these focus on job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Drury, 2004; Miars, 2004; Hebert, 2003; Thompson, 2002), but none look at a post-secondary honor society. Others focus on religious institutions (Anderson, 2005; Thompson, 2002; Rude, 2005; Letting, 2004; Lawton, 2004; Ingram, 2003; Thompson, 2002; Wilking, 2001), and still others focus on higher education outside of a religious influence (Moerer, 2005; Smith, 2005; Iken, 2005; Markwardt, 2001). Only one dissertation looked at servant leadership in a fraternity setting (Williams-Scurlock, 2005).

This is the closest dissertation to this current research of Phi Theta Kappa, and even then, there are differences between a fraternity and an honor society.

University fraternities can be purely social organizations, whose members are affiliated together by some common interest, such as in the declaration of a common major study of program, or they can also contain a service component. An example of a university fraternity is Beta Theta Pi. This fraternity was established in 1879. Its mission statement includes social components, such as lifelong friendships, responsible leadership, responsible social conduct and a commitment to community (“Mission and Objectives,” n.d.). The social component of this fraternity can also be highlighted in the way that members can be recognized. For example, the Francis W. Shepardson Award recognizes members who provide lifelong service to the fraternity (“Recognition,” n.d.). An honor society differs from a fraternity in that there is no specific area of interest that is a common denominator. In the case of Phi Theta Kappa, membership does not require any particular interest or major. Eligibility criteria are based on academic achievement in an associate degree program. There is a hybrid of both types of organizations called an honor fraternity. Phi Sigma Pi is such a hybrid (“Frequently Asked Questions,” n.d.). Phi Sigma Pi offers a clear description of the difference between an honor society, such as Phi Theta Kappa, and an honor fraternity, such as Phi Sigma Pi. Phi Sigma Pi indicated that:

The essential difference between an honor fraternity and an honor society is that an honor society is an association rather than an organization, and it functions mainly to recognize the past academic achievements of its potential members. The honor fraternity seeks to organize the service, fun-raising, social and recreational potential of its membership while promoting its dedication to and respect for education and academic excellence (“Frequently Asked Questions,” n.d., ¶ 2).

The differences highlighted between a fraternity, an honor society and an honor fraternity is slight, but is great enough to deserve separate definitions. Research findings from one type of organization may not be generalized to another type, so the sampling frame of a study must be clearly defined.

Greenleaf indicated that servant leadership is especially important in educational institutions because curriculum of his time failed to prepare individuals for leadership (2002). He concluded that this was especially true for the disadvantaged population (2002), and it is this population that the community college systems seek to provide post-secondary opportunities for. This is where Phi Theta Kappa fills an educational gap. Phi Theta Kappa is dedicated to the community college student, of which, a major portion of the students are from the more disadvantaged sections of the general population. An example of the typical community college student can be found from one college's self study for the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. In this case, the specific college determined that the average freshman, while possessing a high school diploma or a GED certificate, was still under-prepared for college-level work, and is probably the first in his or her family to attend college (*Hesser, 2004*). Even though this information is from one college offering associate degree programs, Horn, Peter and Rooney (2002) found that "proficiency test scores also showed that many NELS (National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988) community college students began their postsecondary education with relatively low ability levels in mathematics and reading" (Horn, et al., 2002). They also found that only 36% of these students were "academically qualified to attend a 4-year institution" (Horn, et al., 2002). Horn, Peter and Rooney also discovered that 44% of the students involved in this 1988 study left college without obtaining a degree, while only 29% had

transferred to a 4-year institution, and only 80% of these students either obtained a bachelor degree or were still working towards a bachelor degree at the end of 6 year study (2002).

These statistics indicate that there is indeed a place for Phi Theta Kappa in the community college system, and that their emphasis on servant leadership is an important one. Understanding how well students perceive servant leadership behaviors within the organization can help provide Phi Theta Kappa with valuable information on how successful they are in obtaining their goals. Additionally, this study will add significant knowledge to the work that is currently available on servant leadership, as it will explore a new avenue of study; that of servant leadership in college honors societies. In turn, this study will provide evidence of how well Phi Theta Kappa fulfills Greenleaf's remedy of how colleges can:

Raise the spirit of young people, help them build their confidence that they can successfully contend with the condition, work with them to find the direction they need to go and the competencies they need to acquire, and send them on their way (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 185).

### Research Questions and Study Variables

This study will look at servant leadership behaviors in a new area; a college honor society. An exploratory report will be used to address the following research questions:

1. Are servant leadership behaviors perceived by the student officers within Phi Theta Kappa?
2. Is there a connection between the level of servant leadership behaviors being perceived by the student officers and their level of satisfaction with their position in the organization?

3. Do these perceptions change according to the study demographic variables?

For this research project, the following demographic variables are: the number of chapter advisors, the number of officers currently serving in the chapter, the level of chapter activity as measured by the Society's five-star system, the divisional affiliation of the chapter, and the size of the college where the chapter is located. Demographic variables were presented as part of the survey distributed to a sample of chapter officers within the Society.

The number of chapter advisors was an interesting variable to consider, as it was considered that chapters with multiple advisors may have received different ratings than chapters with a sole advisor. It was questioned whether sole advisors interact more with student officers than advisors who may be responsible for just an area of chapter activities. This in turn it was thought might have influenced student perceptions.

The five-star rating system is a measure of chapter activities on Society identified programs, such as measuring the level of a chapter's participation in the Honors Topic program. It was thought that it might be interesting to understand the level of chapter activity in relationship to the perceived level of servant leadership behaviors.

The regional affiliation is another interesting variable. There are 29 regions in Phi Theta Kappa, and the influence of this regional affiliation might have provided information on how regions vary from each other. As it was, only 52 responses were received. Since these 52 responses were spread out among all remaining 28 regions of Phi Theta Kappa, these regions were recoded into the 4 divisions of Phi Theta Kappa in order to understand if regional affiliation affected student officer perspectives.

The size of the college was thought to be a possible influential variable as well. Smaller campuses might be more personal than larger campuses, and this might have caused the student officers to have more contact with their advisors than on larger campuses.

The answers to the research questions were interesting, as it was hoped that leadership perception trends could be identified. Of special interest, were any trends that might have been related to the respondent demographics, such as in the areas of chapter involvement and divisional affiliation, which might provide a more in-depth understanding of the overall Society.

### Definition of Terms

The following terms are used throughout this paper:

*Advisor.* Advisors are employees of the colleges where they serve. They are responsible for the activities of their local chapters and may help coordinate regional activities under the guidance of the Regional Coordinator.

*Five-star.* The Five-Star program of Phi Theta Kappa is a way of measuring chapter activity levels in other Society programs. A one-star status indicates a chapter that has fulfilled documentation requirements, provides a new member orientation, has a formal induction of new members service, displays Phi Theta Kappa posters on campus, and meets at least once a month. To be recognized as a five-star chapter, the chapter must also participate in regional and international events and programs, such as entering at least four of the International Hallmark awards (“The Five Star Chapter Development Program Requirements”, n.d.).

*Hallmark awards program.* The Phi Theta Kappa Hallmark Awards Program recognizes chapters that have had exemplary programming throughout the year. Chapters can enter chapter

award categories, such as competing for the Leadership Hallmark award, and individual award categories, such as the Chapter Officer Award.

*Honors program.* The Phi Theta Kappa Honors Program is designed to provide chapters with the opportunity to explore academic topics. Satellite seminars are available for viewing and discussing, as is a Case Study Challenge, which is a competition that is designed by the USA Today newspaper.

*Phi Theta Kappa.* Phi Theta Kappa is the international honor society of the two-year college. Chapters can be chartered at any college or university that offers associate-degree programs. Phi Theta Kappa will also be identified as the Society.

*Phi Theta Kappa headquarters' staff.* Phi Theta Kappa headquarters' staff are employees of Phi Theta Kappa who are paid salaries or wages by the organization.

*Organizational Leadership Assessment instrument (OLA).* The OLA is a 66-question Likert-type scaled developed by Dr. James Laub in 1988, to discover organizational health based on six key areas, which include: displays authenticity, values people, develops people, builds a community, provides leadership, and shares leadership (Welcome to the Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA) & the OLA Group, n.d.).

*Regional coordinator.* Regional Coordinators are employees of the colleges where they serve as advisors, and have the additional responsibility of overseeing activities within one of 29 regions of the Society.

*Servant leadership.* Robert K. Greenleaf coined the term *servant leadership* in 1969, to describe a form of leadership, where the leader concerns himself or herself to the development of the followers for organizational health (Greenleaf, 2002).

## Assumptions and Limitations

This was an exploratory, case study of Phi Theta Kappa. Therefore, analysis of the organization can be generalized for Phi Theta Kappa only. Generalizations can not be projected onto other populations or honor societies. Additionally, this is not a longitudinal project. The data collection had a limited time frame, and therefore analysis can only be used to describe the current situation at the time of data collection. Because Phi Theta Kappa changes student officers on a yearly basis, and active members become alumni members when they either graduate or leave their associate degree programs, the analysis will be limited to describing what the current officer responses are. Analysis can not be generalized for other time periods.

## Nature of the Study

This study was an exploratory, descriptive, case study of Phi Theta Kappa, based on information gathered from a sample of current student officers in the Society. A limited focus group was conducted in the New England Region to gain understanding of the student officers' understanding of servant leadership. Following this focus group, a systematic sample of student officers were sent an invitational e-mail, requesting their participation in completing the Organizational Leadership Assessment instrument, with instructions on how to access the secure Web page. The respondents' survey results were then put in a database and analyzed using SPSS software.

The focus group was done with the New England region only. This region is accessible to the researcher, and information was gathered on student officer perceptions of servant leadership only. While the researcher was known to past student officers of this region, the timing of the focus group was in the fall of 2006. The focus group consisted of recently elected officers who

had not had the opportunity to develop any relationship with the researcher so that any bias because of the researcher's activity within the Society was kept to a minimal.

Phi Theta Kappa agreed to provide the researcher with e-mail addresses of all current student officers in the fall of 2006. This information was given in a database form, and the New England region was eliminated from the second part of the research. This further helped to eliminate any bias based on a relationship or personal knowledge of the researcher. A systematic sample was done by choosing every tenth entry into a second database which was used as the sample population. An invitational e-mail was sent to student officers in this database, which invited their participation in the research and provided instructions on accessing a secured Web site where the OLA was accessible. The online OLA was designed in such a way to allow respondents to answer or refuse to answer any question on the instrument and to submit it when the respondent is finished. Initial responses were low, so a second and a third e-mail invitation was sent. Prior to the third e-mail, Phi Theta Kappa's Executive Director sent an e-mail to all possibly affected advisors in an attempt to encourage student officer participation. Additionally, a hard copy of all materials was mailed to those who had not responded. To further encourage participation, the invitational e-mail and mailed packets included a section indicating that all participants can choose to enter a drawing for the book, *The Might & the Almighty*, by Madeleine Albright. The Web page containing the OLA had directions to a second secured Web page where respondents could enter the drawing, while protecting respondent identity. For participants who responded by regular mail, a separate sheet was included in the mailed packet, which the participant sent in to the researcher. This page did contain personal information including the participants' name and mailing address. Once these pages were received, they were separated from the survey so that any identifier could not be traced back to any one survey. One

participant's information was drawn and the aforementioned book was sent to that participant once the data was analyzed.

Once data had been gathered, SPSS software was utilized to examine trends. At the end of this study, the raw data and the information from the data will be kept on a flash drive and in written form in the researcher's safety deposit box for no less than a seven-year timeframe.

### Organization of the Following Chapters

Chapter 1 has provided an overview of the research project, including a description of the case study organization, Phi Theta Kappa, and the emphasis that the Society places on servant leadership. Additionally, chapter one has provided an overview of the plan of the research project itself, including a preliminary focus group, and the use of the OLA.

Chapter 2 provides a literature review, including where servant leadership fits in the overall study of leadership theories, a review of how servant leadership is relevant in the contemporary society, as well as how other forms of leadership are also important in organizations. Understanding how current students affect the current and future workforce will also be provided.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the research project, including steps taken for the preliminary focus group, the sampling decisions, and plans to increase response rates.

Chapter 4 provides the findings from the descriptive statistical analysis of the responses, as well as findings from other statistical tests performed.

Finally, chapter 5 presents a discussion based on the finding, relating these findings to Phi Theta Kappa specifically.

## CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A Brief Introduction into Servant Leadership and Its Place in Leadership Theory and the Contemporary Organization

It has been theorized that “leadership is one of the world’s oldest preoccupations” (Bass, 1990, p. 3). In order to fully understand how servant leadership evolved, a brief overview of some of the more popular leadership theories will be examined. From this discussion, servant leadership’s place among these theories will become clear, as these theories move from focusing on the leader to focusing on how the leader should be developing his or her followers.

Leadership theories began with what was referred to as the great man concept, and eventually evolved into a wide range of trait theories. This theme of theories contends, “Leadership qualities are in-born, that people naturally follow the individual who have these qualities” (Lippitt, 1969, p. 2). It was thought that leaders emerged from the group because of the in-born characteristics that he/she was endowed with, and that these traits somehow legitimized the role of the leader (Stogdill, 1975). The limits of the trait theories were announced in the mid-1950s, when Carter and Startle “maintained that the trait approach had reached a dead-end, suggested that attention be directed toward the behavior of the leader” (Stogdill, 1975, p. 4). Owens even noted, “Decades of social-science research, when finally tallied, added up to very ambiguous results” (1973, p. 54).

Even though Owens (1973) suggested that the trait theories hit a dead-end in 1973, Katz came to a similar conclusion much earlier, but for a very different reason. Katz indicated that the “quest for the executive stereotype has become so intense that many companies, in concentrating on certain specific traits or qualities, stand in danger of losing sight of their real concern: what a

man can accomplish” (Katz, 1955, p. 33). From Katz’s perspective, the trait theories might hold some relevance, but they did not have a clear-cut tie to performance. Katz suggested that organizations rely on three individual set of skills, which can be learned: technical skills, human skills, and conceptual skills (1955). The skills approach did not answer all of the leadership questions, and so a shift in leadership theory occurred. Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs, and Fleishman (2000) noted that, “No studies conducted to date, however, have attempted to provide systematic evidence for the knowledge and skills held to underlie leader performance in this theoretical system” (p. 27).

A shift in theories occurred, which examined how the role of the followers influenced leader effectiveness. The leader-member exchange theory, first called the vertical dyad linkage model, acknowledges that the leader interacts with individual followers in unique ways (Yrle, Hartman & Galle, Jr., 2003). This theory indicates that subordinates are chosen by the leader to either be in the more trusted in-group, which receives more responsibility; or in the out-group, where followers are assigned the more routine tasks (Liden & Graen, 1980). The leader-member exchange theory indicates that the leader makes the choice of in-group and out-group membership, based on his or her interactions with the individual subordinate (Liden & Graen, 1980). Additionally, the leader “will exert pressure upon the individual in a form of a role expectation episode” (Dienesch & Liden, 1986, p. 621).

Transformational leadership moves leadership theories further on the leadership continuum to a new place, which requires that the leader somehow “elevates the follower’s level of maturity and ideals as well as concerns for the achievement, self-actualization, and the well-being of others, the organization, and society” (Bass, 1999, p. 11). It is no longer sufficient for the leader to develop communication patterns with individual followers, now the leader has a

responsibility to develop the followers. Bass (1990) described how transformational leaders use the rewards of “achievement, glory, humanity, fortune, country, faith, or family, which demanded excessive costs relative to tangible benefits” (p. 367). The followers in the pursuit of these lofty rewards ignore self-interest, and individuals such as Joan of Arc, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mahatma Gandhi and Winston Churchill are pointed out as examples of successful transformational leaders (Bass, 1990).

In the early 1970s, another leadership theory shift occurred, which emphasizes the leader’s responsibility towards the follower even more. This was necessary, according to Robert K. Greenleaf, as contemporary society is “in the age of the anti-leader” (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 18).

Since Greenleaf originally wrote about servant-leadership in the 1970s, much has changed, and the confusion that Greenleaf experienced when trying to heal institutions that had fallen (Greenleaf, 2002) has helped in shaping ideas about leadership and followership in contemporary organizations. Additionally, more knowledge has been accumulated regarding the needs of today’s workers, which helps to explain why servant-leadership has come unto serious study. Izzo and Withers (2001) indicated that in earlier times, “there have always been more workers than positions available, which means there was never any doubt as to who set the rules and who was in control” (p. 7). That world no longer exists. “Now, not only do skilled workers increasingly have their pick of employers, they’ve learned to negotiate salaries and benefits with all the aplomb of yesterday’s executives” (Izzo & Withers, 2001, p. 7). Beyond this, contemporary employees expect that their lives will be balanced between work and their private endeavors; that their work will have a noble cause; that they will experience personal growth as a result of their jobs; that the ancient corporate hierarchy will cease and that they will be viewed as partners in their companies; that they will experience a sense of community at work; and finally,

that there will be a mutual sense of trust between employee and employer (Izzo & Withers, 2002). From this perspective of looking at what employees are expecting from organizations, servant leadership fits well within contemporary organizations. In explaining servant leadership, Greenleaf highlights George Fox, the founder of the Religious Society of Friends in England, better known as Quakers (Greenleaf, 2002). Greenleaf indicated that servant leaders are:

Those who by nature are disposed to be servants (in the sense of helping others to become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous and more likely themselves to be servants) and who therefore can help others to move in constructive directions. Servant-leaders are *healers* in the sense of *making whole* by helping others to a larger and nobler vision and purpose than they would be likely to attain for themselves (2002, p. 240).

From the perspective of the needs of contemporary workers, and the ideals of servant leadership, a match may be found that enables organizations to flourish. A closer examination of servant leadership will highlight the concept more fully, and provide a basis for research.

### Servant Leadership

Robert K. Greenleaf discovered his servant leadership concept in the 1969 as he wrote an essay entitled, *The Servant as Leader* (Greenleaf, 2002). However, Greenleaf indicated that the concepts of servant leadership became clear to him after reading Hermann Hesse's *Journey to the East* (Greenleaf, 2002), which was published in 1956 (Hesse, 1956). As in *Journey to the East*, Greenleaf believed that followers "will freely respond only to individuals who are chosen as leaders because they are proven and trusted as servants" (Greenleaf, 1991, p. 4). He was not alone in considering the value of being a servant-leader, as Hegel had "argued that by first serving as a follower, a leader subsequently can best understand his followers" (Hegel

1930/1971, as referred to by Bass, 1990, p. 4). Drucker as well, talked of leadership as "the lifting of a man's vision to higher sights, the raising of a man's performance to a higher standard, the building of a man's personality beyond its normal limitations" (Drucker, 1986, p. 159-160). Greenleaf's vision of servant leadership differed from Hegel's. Both indicated a need for leaders to be servants first; however Hegel indicated that this experience would allow the leader to understand the follower position better, where for Greenleaf, this servant aspect continued throughout the leadership position and formed the basis for the leader to continually provide growth opportunities for the followers (Greenleaf, 2002). Greenleaf's vision is however similar to Drucker's writing. Greenleaf saw a need for the then-current leadership styles to change towards servant-leadership rather than the popular thinking of the time. This anguish is illustrated when he wrote that:

The servant-leader concept emerged after a deep involvement with colleges and universities during the period of campus turmoil in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It was a wearing experience to watch distinguished institutions show their fragility and crumble, to search for an understanding of what happened to them (and never be satisfied that I knew) and to try to help heal their wounds (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 17).

The 1960s and the 1970s was a time of unrest, with the baby boomer generation questioning authority, the Viet Nam War and societal expectations changing to reflect the hippy culture. The dynamics of that era can be seen in the headlines from the *New York Times* newspaper. On May 18, 1960, the headline read "Summit conference breaks up in dispute; West blames Khrushchev's rigid stand; he insists on Eisenhower spying apology" (Sulzberger, 1994, p. 202). This headline demonstrates how delicate the situation was in regards to the Cold War, as Americans were concerned that the Russians would sign a peace agreement with East Germany

(Sulzberger, 1994). The situation on the American home front was difficult as well, as racial issues and civil rights were the topic on the September 30, 1962 headline of the New York Times, which read, “Kennedy federalizes Mississippi’s Guard; mobilizes troops, orders state to yield; addresses nation today on racial crisis” (Sulzberger, 1994, p. 214). The 1970s were echoing similar trying times for Americans, both abroad and at home. The New York Times headline on May 9, 1972 read, “Nixon orders enemy’s ports mined; says materiel will be denied Hanoi until it frees P.O.W.’s and halts war” (Sulzberger, 1994, p. 248). The August 30, 1973 New York Times headline hits Americans closer to home, as it read, “Judge Sirica orders Nixon to yield tapes to him for a decision on Grand Jury use; President declares he will not comply” (Sulzberger, 1994, p. 258). This difficult time for America continued as on August 9, 1974, the New York Times headline announced, “Nixon resigns he urges a time of healing; Ford will take office today” (Sulzberger, 1994, p. 265). These headlines from reflect the nature of the times. The world had changed from Greenleaf’s youth.

It is not known what Greenleaf thought about the world’s political climate, or exactly how he felt that the world influenced American organizations. What is known is that he looked at his contemporary society and concluded that "the fault lay with the institutions: they weren't doing a good job of serving, therefore, they were doing a poor job of leading" (Who Was Robert K. Greenleaf?, n.d., ¶ 2). Greenleaf understood however, that leadership in itself had to change, as he noted, "But, alas, we live in the age of the anti-leader, and our vast educational structure devotes very little care to nurturing leaders or to understand followership" (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 18). In trying to capture the hope of the future generation, Greenleaf wrote and spoke on the concept that emphasized the need for the leader to serve the followers and to develop servant

organizations. In explaining how the servant-leader behavior differed from other leaders, Greenleaf wrote:

I have tried to delineate the servant as one who meets the test of a higher law whose requirements of both persons and institutions are proportional to their opportunity to serve. While I would like to see more nonservants converted to servanthood, my greater hope is that more of those who are natural servants, who get joy out of serving, will become aggressive builders of serving institutions. Within these institutions the opportunity may seem larger for those in higher status positions; but, as more and more people, regardless of their status, are asserting their autonomy and articulating their beliefs (a commendable trend), literally everyone who is inside and who has some force as a person can be an institution builder (Greenleaf, 1991, p. 64).

Greenleaf identified ten abilities that servant-leaders must possess, and these include the ability to listen intently to others, the ability to understand and empathize with others, the ability to heal one's self and one's relationship to others, the ability to have a general awareness of self, the ability to be able to persuade others rather than coerce others, the ability to dream great dreams, and look beyond the day-to-day realities to conceptualize problems, the ability to foresee likely outcomes, the ability to be committed to serving the needs of others first, and ability to have a belief in the intrinsic value of others, beyond their contributions as workers, and the ability to build a community among those who work in institutions (Greenleaf, 2002; Spears, 2002).

It is evident in these above-mentioned abilities, that Greenleaf's idea of a servant-leader must value the followers and seeks to improve the followers as humans as well as workers. This outlook is vastly different than what is evident in the newspaper titles of the time. Greenleaf's

sense of human dignity reflects his Quaker heritage, and he does write extensively on George Fox, the founder of the Quaker religion (Greenleaf, 2002). The religious influence is not restricted to the Quaker religion however, as Greenleaf identifies others as true servant-leaders, such as Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (Greenleaf, 2002). It would appear that Greenleaf's Quaker beliefs found a common ground in some very Jewish thoughts, as Greenleaf highlighted Rabbi Heschel's words often. In particular, Greenleaf highlighted the Rabbi's idea that "every little deed counts...And above all, remember that the meaning of life is to build a life as if it were a work of art" (Heschel, as quoted in Greenleaf, 2002, p. 263). Greenleaf noted that when he was in the company of Rabbi Heschel, he "was lifted above all the differences that divide people" (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 267). One wonders if Greenleaf saw in the Jewish tradition of rabbis, a basic leadership concept for servant-leadership, as a rabbi is a teacher, not necessarily a leader. As a teacher, it is the rabbi's duty to teach others of the community so that each can fulfill the mitzvot (good deed) of studying the Torah (Witty & Witty, 2002). Any adult of the Jewish community can lead prayers, and it was only recently that the pastoral duties identified with priests and pastors became part of the rabbi's position (Witty & Witty, 2001), which greatly differentiated Judaism from Christianity. This leadership structure of the Jewish faith therefore resembles Greenleaf's idea that a Roman *primus* was more beneficial to the followers than the chief position (Greenleaf, 2002).

This change in hierarchical structure is another difference between servant-leadership and other leadership theories. Other theories identify the leader as the one person in charge of others, where servant-leadership looks at the Roman principle that the leader is "first among equals" (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 74). This requires that the focus of leadership be changed from what the leader possesses or does, to how the followers change because of the leadership (Greenleaf,

2002). As this shift in emphasis moves however, it must be cautioned that the definition of servant must be changed since historically, the concept of a servant was that there was less value in this role than in other roles in society (Spears & Lawrence, 2002).

### The Shift of Focus Towards the Follower

Victor Hugo was quoted as saying, “There’s nothing as powerful as an idea whose time has come” (Hugo, as quoted in Greenleaf, 2002, p. 1), and according to Convey, “Servant leadership’s time has come” (Convey, as quoted in Greenleaf, 2002, p. 1). This is a far cry from the concept that leaders had in-born attributes or, as Woodward wrote, “In the queer mess of human destiny the determining factor is luck” (Woodward, as quoted by Cawthon, 1992, p. 11).

### *Paradigms in Leadership Theory*

The study of leadership “is one of the world’s oldest preoccupations” (Bass, 1990, p. 3). Stories of the great men of history abound in myths, legends and stories (Bass, 1990). It is not surprising that the study of leadership first focused on the great leaders, as what could be said about the masses within a story? The great pyramids may have been built by millions of slaves, but it is the pharaohs that are remembered. The leaders stand out, the masses do not. This can be seen in the animal kingdom as well, as science has a long understanding of the pecking order of primates (Bass, 1990). However, just as trait theories no longer answered leadership questions, focusing on the leader alone, no longer answers questions. The world had changed.

Leadership beliefs have changed. The Great Man theories and the trait theories concerned themselves with the in-born traits that leaders had versus the other traits possessed by the masses. Skills theories looked at what leaders can accomplish. Drucker didn’t believe in the skills theory. He wrote, “But leadership cannot be created or promoted. It cannot be taught or learned” (1986,

p. 158). He also believed that “management cannot create leaders. Management can only create the conditions under which potential leadership qualities become effective; or it can stifle potential leadership” (Drucker, 1986, p. 159). Drucker wrote about the shift that was occurring in leadership theory, as he spoke of situational leadership, without ever using the theoretical terms. This was the management of his time.

### *Changes in the Workplace*

The unskilled laborer of yesterday who contributed only animal strength has become the semi-skilled machine operator of today who has to exercise judgment—though of a routine nature—when he tends the machine, feeds in material and inspects the product. The skilled worker has moved from the workshop into the plant—remaining a skilled worker or becoming a supervisor or technician (Drucker, 1986, p. 255).

Drucker saw the technological change of his time, and how it changed the needs of the business environment, and even cautioned that focusing on the minimum would destroy motivation, which was required by then contemporary workers (1986). However, at that time, he did not see the workforce as anything other than different masses, which need to be led by leaders, who somehow emerged without being trained or taught. Leadership theories still focused on the leader, either by emphasizing traits or skills. These theories fit in the world of Drucker’s time.

The world of work has changed again. Currently, “workers at every level must be more responsible, autonomous, and self-motivated than ever before, with the authority to make quick and important decisions” (Izzo & Withers, 2001, p. 5). As much as Drucker focused on the leaders earlier in his career, later on he understood the importance of knowledge workers and how managers needed to be their protectors, not their leaders (Drucker, 2005). The workplace

concept of resources changed with knowledge workers; as companies needed to understand “that the most valuable knowledge of a company resides largely in the heads of its most talented employees” (Bryan & Joyce, 2005) who could easily leave the firm. This shift in focus at the workplace required a shift in focus in leadership theories, as it became more important to understand the followers.

### *Tying Leadership Needs to Organizational Evolution*

This change has been constantly evolving over time. Toffler and Toffler (1995) discussed three waves of evolution, beginning with the First Wave, the agricultural age, which lasted from approximately 10,000 years ago until about 1650. The Second Wave began with the Industrial Revolution in Europe, and lasted until about 1956, when the Third Wave began in the United States. White-collar workers outnumbered blue-collar workers and the rise of the knowledge economy had begun (Toffler & Toffler, 1995). These evolutionary waves are handy references when considering the evolutions of leadership theory as well. The Agricultural Age drew stories of great men and royal families gaining power throughout the world. The Second Wave saw industrialization, and democracy, which gave power to the common man, and the first need to study management. This Third Wave emphasizes the talents of the individuals rather than concentrating on the traits or skills of leaders. Organizations key assets are intangible, as they lie within the brains of individual employees (Toffler & Toffler, 1998). These new workers “must assume decision-making responsibility—and must do so within a kaleidoscopically changing organization structure built upon highly transient human relations” (Toffler, 1971, p. 10). This new man, as Toffler wrote, now takes on a leadership role, that of self-leadership, which Drucker indicated needed a protector, not a manager (2005). How long this Third Wave lasted or will last is debatable. Levy (2005) wrote that a fourth wave is already upon us, as there are two new

focuses. The first focus is on “expanding the consciousness of the individual knowledge worker” (Levy, 2005, p. 64), and the second focus is the need to tap “the collective consciousness of the knowledge workforce” (Levy, 2005, p. 64). The need to understand the knowledge worker changes the needs of leadership theory, as workers will refuse “to be treated as interchangeable” (Toffler, 1980, p.12). Workers are also demanding more from their work environment. Michael Hammer is quoted as having said, “It is thrilling to be part of a revolution that replaces meaningless work, petty bureaucracy and dead-end jobs with a workplace to which people enjoy coming, knowing they will be challenged and appreciated” (Hammer, as quoted by Izzo & Withers, 2001, p. 25). This new self-reliant, sophisticated worker fits well within the concepts of servant-leadership, which strives to serve the followers first, with a dedication to ensure that followers are developed to their fullest, to hopefully become the next servant-leaders (Greenleaf, 2002).

In conclusion, leadership theories have evolved to answer the changing questions of the times, which have become more sophisticated in nature as our understanding increased. The focus has changed from the leader to the follower as the importance of the individual follower grew. No longer were followers indistinguishable from the mass. Each had a unique knowledge base, separate from others, and valued by the organization. In some respects then, the focus has changed as leadership theories moved from highlighting the hero, to highlighting the need to consider followers as sophisticated, self-reliant forces.

### Servant Leadership and Organizational Performance

An organization’s workforce might be the most important resource that an organization can claim to possess (Roepke, 2000), and getting the most out of the workforce requires newer

strategies than the command-and control leadership model of the past. In writing the foreword for Robert Greenleaf's book on servant-leadership, Stephen R. Covey indicated that servant-leadership is defined by a set of values, which transcends cultural variances to make this type of leadership enduring (2002). In Covey's writing, he indicated that "the essence of moral authority or conscience is sacrifice—the subordination of one's self or one's ego to a higher purpose" (Covey, Greenleaf, 2002, p. 6). The action "democratizes and elevates ego to a larger sense of the group, the whole, the community, the greater good" (Covey, Greenleaf, 2002, p. 6). It follows that servant-leadership, by its self-sacrificing behavior would enhance organizational performance by encouraging employees to put their own needs aside for the needs of the greater organization's community.

The link between self-sacrificing behavior and organizational performance has been examined in the literature. Yeon and Mai-Dalton (1999) identified self-sacrificing behavior in transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, servant-leadership, and heroic self-sacrifice concepts. They indicated that this type of behavior strengthens leadership because it builds trust, and can be used by leaders for modeling the desired behavior in followers (Yeon & Mai-Dalton, 1999). Additionally, Yeon and Mai-Dalton "proposed that self-sacrificial leadership will facilitate individual and organizational adaptations to changing environments and that followers will attribute charisma and legitimacy to a self-sacrificial leader" (1999, p. 398-399). Because these researchers identified self-sacrificing behavior as "the total/partial abandonment, and/or permanent/temporary postponement of personal interests, privileges, or welfare in the (1) division of labor, (2) distribution of rewards, and (3) exercise of power" (Yeon & Mai-Dalton, 1999, p. 399), it can be theorized that followers might reciprocate in similar manners for the

benefit of the organization, especially when charismatic leaders model this self-sacrificing behavior as the desired behavior.

Yeon and Mai-Dalton (1999) put their ideas into their research and studied one group of students, and one group of industry employees to find out how the subjects would react to different leadership behavior. They found a strong correlation between self-sacrificing leadership behaviors and the students' perception of the leader's legitimacy in the student group, and a weaker correlation between self-sacrificing leadership and employee perception of the leader with the employee group. In both groups there was a correlation, and Yeon and Mai-Dalton proposed that:

The results suggest that self-sacrificial leadership will positively influence the followers' perceptions about the leader and their attitudes toward the leader. Followers will respect and be proud of being associated with a self-sacrificial leader (charisma), accept the leader as their own (legitimacy), and intend to reciprocate and follow the example of the leader (reciprocity) (1999, p. 414).

Ehrhart (2004), examined servant-leadership behaviors and organizational citizenship behavior. He quoted Organ's (1988) definition of organizational citizenship behavior as "individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization" (Ehrhart, 2004, p. 62). Ehrhart's 2004 study linked servant-leadership with organizational citizenship behavior with the hypothesis that:

The behavior that servant-leaders model includes "serving" their subordinates by forming quality relationships with them and helping them grow and develop. Thus, units with

servant-leaders would have members who will emulate this behavior in their interactions with each other and, thus, display higher levels of OCB (Ehrhart, 2004, p. 69-70).

Ehrhart's idea that servant-leadership behaviors include ethical behavior and follower supportive behavior, and therefore has a positive influence on both the followers' perception of procedural justice and unit-level organizational citizenship behavior was supported in his study (2004). Ehrhart's study and Yeon and Mai-Dalton's study do support Covey's assertion that servant-leadership's moral component attracts followers to servant-leaders (Greenleaf, 2002), as well as Greenleaf's belief that servant-leadership allows organizational leaders to build better teams in order to have a more successful business (Greenleaf, 2002). Literature therefore reflects the importance of servant-leadership behavior in organizational citizenship behavior, as well as in modeling self-sacrificing behavior, for the overall improvement of organizational performance.

### *Servant-Leadership and Organizational Development*

The old model of training is giving way to a more democratic model: the learning partnership. Trainers who use the new model recognize and release the unique talents and wisdom of participants and act as learning partners. Sharing knowledge power is what natural learning partnerships are all about (Lyerly & Maxey, 2001, p. 24).

The above quote reflects the contemporary training thought, which takes the learner and instructor, out of pedagogy learning model, where the teacher imparts knowledge to the student; and into the andragogy model, where the learners' experience and active involvement in the learning process is as important, if not more so, than the teacher's knowledge (Knowles, Holton, III, and Swanson, 2005). This empowerment of the learner follows current professional training and development programs, as more and more organizations are putting servant-leadership

theories into the heart of their businesses and training programs. Servant-leadership, by recognizing the value of the follower/learner, works well in the andragogy theory and has become the way to design training programs that motivate and retain talented employees.

While servant-leadership's emphasis on service to others has a natural match in service industries (Lyerly & Maxey, 2001) and in training programs, it is also appropriate to other industries' business strategies. Bill Turner, of Synovus Financial Corporation, understood that the culture of servant-leadership is at the heart of his company's culture, and is specifically why Synovus is "a great place to work" (Blanchard, 2004, p. 6). Blanchard (2004) continued to stress the importance of people within the Synovus Financial Corporation, when he wrote, "We seize the opportunity every day to reinforce our strengths and evaluate our weaknesses to create an atmosphere of respect, trust, loyalty and pride" (Blanchard, 2004, p. 6). The corporate web page highlights the corporate culture as "one of caring for each other, of serving and treating others the way you want to be treated" ("Vision and Values," n.d., ¶ 3). TDIndustries have also understood the importance of servant-leadership, as it had been identified as the way to "ensure that employees will succeed as a total person, grow with the company and feel important. Through extensive personal and professional training programs, TDI cultivates well-rounded employees, while simultaneously enhancing its bottom line" (McLaughlin, 2001, ¶ 2).

All businesses have a customer service component to them, even if services are not in the product line. For service industries however, this component of their business can be what separates an average organization from a great one. An example of the importance of servant-leadership in the training and development needs of an organization can be seen at the University of Chicago Hospitals (UCH). UCH understood the need for servant-leadership behaviors and looked at the Disney organization for help in turning patient's perceptions of their encounters at

the hospital into satisfactory encounters (Schueler, 2000). Upper management at UCH realized that patients were unable to judge the quality of the medical care they received, but did remember how they were treated, and often equated overall treatment with quality of medical care (Schueler, 2000). UCH developed a culture of continual learning “designed to improve individual and organizational performance” (Schueler, 2000, p. 28). This new culture and training opportunities resulted in a lower attrition rate, increased productivity, and increased patient satisfaction ratings (Schuler, 2000). At the basis of all this, is servant-leadership. Patients are cared for, employees are developed, and the bottom-line improved.

Another example of how important servant-leadership is to training programs and overall organizational importance is in the success of Wal-Mart. It “is an attitude of servant leadership that considers the most important people in Wal-Mart to be the associates at the front lines who take care of customers” (“Fresh Ideas Strengthen Deep Cultural Roots”, 1999, p. 99). While Wal-Mart’s executive staff is made up of a combination of new hires and long-time associates, it is the servant-leadership culture that has placed the focus of business activities on serving others. This service is what differentiates Wal-Mart from ordinary discount stores.

The question might be asked, how does servant-leadership fit into the idea of training and development? In the past, “job hopping was frowned upon, (and) employees tended to stick with one employer for a lifetime” (Izzo & Withers, 2001, p. 3). This is no longer true.

Over the past two decades, workers have gone from secure jobs, lifelong careers, and predictable ascents up corporate ladders, to a world of temporary jobs, lifelong learning, and highly competitive industries in which they’re only as good as their last gig, regardless of rank or experience. All this has triggered a deluge of words on how workers had better adapt or die (Izzo & Withers, 2001, p. 4).

Izzo and Withers (2001) indicated that employers need to understand that workers have had a shift in their values over the past few decades, and if the employer wishes to retain key employees, the organization must value them enough to invest in them. This is the key of servant-leadership. Greenleaf indicated that the way to tell if a leader is a servant-leader or not is to answer one question. Do the followers grow (Greenleaf, 2002)? If the followers become more than what they were, are given opportunities to choose their own solutions to their problems and develop into servant-leaders themselves, then the leader was a true servant-leader (Greenleaf, 2002). This fits with the goals of modern organizational training and development. As earlier examples illustrated, when employees are encouraged to continually develop themselves as individuals and employees, the organization benefits as well.

Servant-leadership, with the emphasis on follower development affects employee motivation as well as training and development. Motivation is no longer seen as a result of reward programs, but as an intrinsic value that workers feel when they are “responsible, autonomous...with the authority to make quick and important decisions” (Izzo & Withers, 2001, p. 5). Equally impressive are the shifts in what workers expect in the modern employer. Expectations that are important in the contemporary employee include the expectation of a work/life balance, the expectation that the work has a noble cause, that they will personally grow as a result of their work, that they are a partner with the organization, that the workplace is a community rather than a mere gathering of individuals, and a level of trust is present (Izzo & Withers, 2001). Servant-leadership behaviors encourage these expectations. Therefore, the servant-leader who meets these expectations can expect a higher level of employee retention and commitment, as evidenced by UCH.

## Servant Leadership Training in Theory

Peter Senge wrote, “We are losing ourselves as fields of dreams. To regain our balance, we must create alternative ways of working, learning, and living” (2004, p. 4). He wrote about how the learning organization, with today’s knowledge workers requires changes from the old ways. He indicated that there are five operating principles of learning organizations, which are: (1) The learning organization embodies new capabilities, (2) Learning organizations are built by servant leaders, (3) learning arises through performance and practice, (4) process and content are inseparable, and (5), learning is dangerous (Senge, 2004). These principles can be understood as a way that the organization accepts its members as valued individuals. When Senge wrote “learning organizations are spaces for conversations and concerted action” (2004, p. 4), he is emphasizing a dialogue between equals rather than a monolog between a superior and a subordinate. When he wrote “The great leader myth absolves us of responsibility for developing leadership capabilities more broadly. In learning organizations, the burden is shifted: a perceived need for leadership can be met by developing leadership capacities in all members” (Senge, 2004, p. 4), he is emphasizing how leaders value followers and serve to develop them into the future servant-leaders (Greenleaf, 2002). When Senge wrote that “people lead because they chose to serve one another and a higher purpose” (2004, p. 4), he mirrors Izzo and Withers discussion of contemporary employees expecting that the work has a noble cause (2001), as well as the religious component of servant-leadership that stresses the idea that living as a servant-leader requires faith (Greenleaf, 2002).

Senge took a poetic stance in describing the needs when building a learning organization.

He stated:

Building learning organizations demands a shift that goes to the core of our culture. We have drifted into a culture that fragments our thoughts, that detaches the self from its community. We have lost our artistic edge. We are so focused on our security that we don't see the price we pay: living in bureaucracies where the wonder and joy of learning have no place. We are losing the spaces to dance with the ever-changing patterns of life. We need to invent a new learning model. This invention will come from the patient efforts of communities of people invoking aspiration and wonder. As these communities emerge, we will regain our memory of the community nature of the self and the poetic nature of language and the world—the memory of the whole (Senge, 2004, p. 5).

Senge's description of the learning organization matches Greenleaf's ideas well. Senge wrote of regaining a community and doing away with the bureaucracy. He wrote of joy. Greenleaf wrote about the same issues, almost forty years earlier, however, Greenleaf referred to Senge's early work himself, as he saw the connection between servant-leadership and Senge's thoughts on a shared vision (Greenleaf, 1986). In describing the institutions of his day, Greenleaf wrote:

Far too many of our contemporary institutions do not have an adequate dream, an imaginative concept that will raise people's sights close to where they have the potential to be...that has the energy to lift people out of their moribund ways to a level of being and relating from which the future can be faced with more hope than most of us can summon today (Greenleaf, 1986, introduction).

These two thoughts fit together well. Greenleaf speaks of the shortcomings of the institutions of his day, and Senge wrote of the fulfillment of Greenleaf's ideas in modern organizations. Organizations of the 1960s through the 1980s were bureaucracies that relied on structure, rules, policies and procedures for their competitive edge. With today's emphasis on the learning organization and the knowledge worker to create and maintain a competitive edge, employees enjoy an importance previously unknown. The relationship between values, trust, and leadership do have an impact on work and organizational productivity (Bennett, 2001), as evidenced by the companies highlighted earlier (UCH, TDI, Wal-Mart). If organizations do not value employees, provide opportunities for their personal and professional development, empower them to make decisions and be proactive in their own work, the employees will seek out organizations that do (Izzo & Withers, 2001).

Servant-leadership then, is a powerful base for the development of a corporate culture. Once this culture is in place, the organization's training and development programs can be outcomes of this idea of developing employees to their fullest potential with hopes that empowered employees improve organizational productivity. The contemporary knowledge worker places more value on individual employees than ever before. Servant-leadership would seem to be an ideal model for not only setting up training and developing programs within organizations, but also would be an ideal model on which to base a company's culture on. As with all theoretical models, the trap is in believing that any one idea or model fits all situations.

#### When Servant Leadership Does Not Work

"If Greenleaf's model makes so much sense and feels so good, then why is it rarely practiced" (Saunders, 1993, p. 6). Saunders (1993) believed that many leaders do not practice

servant-leader behavior because it goes against what has been rewarded in typical organizations, as well as that this type of self-sacrificing behavior puts an individual's ego on the side, which is difficult for so many. When Bennis (2004) described the seven ages of the leader, the servant-leader would be the sage, who passes on wisdom to the young. As the servant-leader develops followers, the sage helps new leaders become comfortable in their role. In many organizations, experienced leaders never get to this stage. They may be stuck in the general age, full of arrogance and unable to accept alternate viewpoints (Bennis, 2004).

Servant-leadership reads like an idealistic view of what can be. Reality is quite different, and "flawed leaders are everywhere" (Kellerman, 2004, p. 41). Kellerman (2004) illustrated this by highlighting how Ronald Reagan was out-of-touch with many groups in American society, that he did not know when he said something offensive. At the far end of the ethical scale, Hitler was a powerful leader, but a highly narcissistic one, who led individuals to ignore their own value system to accomplish horrendous outcomes. Narcissistic leaders are not necessarily the worst type of leader for a company however, as their "compelling, even gripping, visions for companies...attract followers" (Maccoby, 2004, p. 95). These leaders are "gifted in attracting followers...are often skillful orators... (and) are quite dependent on their followers" (Maccoby, 2004, p. 96).

Maccoby (2004) wrote about narcissistic leaders and their place in contemporary organizations. Narcissistic leaders are the individuals that others look for in times of crisis.

Indeed, one reason we look to productive narcissists in times of great transition is that they have the audacity to push through the massive transformations that society periodically undertakes. Productive narcissists are not only risk takers willing to get the job done but also charmers who can convert the masses with their rhetoric. The danger is

that narcissism can turn unproductive when, lacking restraining anchors and self-knowledge, narcissists become unrealistic dreamers. They nurture grand schemes and harbor the illusion that only circumstances or enemies block their success (Maccoby, 2004, p. 94).

This need to have a superstar leader in a time of change, or crisis would negate the benefits of servant-leadership behavior, and in reality, may be damaging to organizational survival. Once the organization is out of the crisis, however, the narcissistic leader can become the focal point of organizational downfall, as these leaders are not open to criticism, and often only want feedback that supports themselves and their decisions (Maccoby, 2004).

Servant-leadership cannot be practiced authentically by leaders who are unable to put their own egos aside either. Leaders, who practice servant-leadership behaviors, when it is not their natural behaviors, may inadvertently create a culture of distrust. Servant-leadership is not for all organizations, as organizations in the midst of turmoil, such as with a merger or a take-over, need a take-charge leader to see the organization through the transition.

#### Servant Leadership, Phi Theta Kappa, the Community College and the Contemporary Organizational Worker

At the time when Greenleaf was first writing about servant leadership, others in the management field were coming to similar conclusions about leadership, but for very different reasons. Maslow wrote a very interesting article in 1970, where expressed his ideas that there are superior people in society and that “no society can be really efficient unless its superior persons are preferred and elected by the other people” (1970, p. 28). Greenleaf does not indicate that leaders are necessarily superior to others, but does stress that followers “freely respond only to

individuals who are chosen as leaders because they are proven and trusted as servants” (2000, p. 24). In both cases, follower acceptance of the leader is of primary importance to leadership.

Maslow also supports Greenleaf’s idea of follower development when he wrote:

The best thing about this new outlook on management is that from whichever point you start, whether from the point of view of what is best for making a profit or from the point of view of what is best for the personal development of the employees, the result is the same. That which is good for personal development is also good for turning out good automobiles and for having a well-run organization that will last for a long time (Maslow, 1970, p. 31).

Although Maslow does not specifically identify Greenleaf as one of the authors of the new management outlook, his belief that “proper management techniques provide employees with opportunities to develop their abilities by participation; in developing themselves they become involved in and committed to the organization” (Maslow, 1970, p. 30-31), is similar to Greenleaf’s idea that individuals who are actually involved in the situation or organization, whatever that situation or organization is, are the ones to solve the problems rather than outsiders (2002).

Along with a change in management theory in Greenleaf’s time, Greenleaf also noted that schools of his time had changed into a “specialized, separate-from-community institution” (2002, p. 51). This is a far cry from the institution that society had “pinned so much of our hopes for a better society” (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 51) on. In contemporary education however, the school has changed, at least for the community college institution. This is clearly evident in Shugart’s 1997 paper, as he indicated that “community colleges are the most vital servant institution of this century” (Shugart, abstract, 1997). Shugart continued however and indicated that community

colleges still need reforms as they relied on coercion in relating to their students (Shugart, 1997). Even though colleges and universities still may fall prey to self-sustaining behaviors, they have done much and “recognize the considerable challenges in providing educational experiences that help learners effectively translate visions and concepts of leadership into practice” (Connaughton, Lawrence & Ruben, 2003, p. 46). There are problems however, and as Connaughton, Lawrence and Ruben indicated, a few classes on leadership or a few isolated leadership experiences is not enough to adequately train students to become leaders (2003). This is where organizations like Phi Theta Kappa step in where community colleges end. Phi Theta Kappa does not offer just an opportunity or two. Phi Theta Kappa offers the community college student the opportunity to become an active participant in their community for most of the student’s academic career. As many programs that are available for active members, opportunities are available for alumni members to become supportive mentors for the next generation of Phi Theta Kappans. The purpose of alumni associations is as follows:

The purpose of the Phi Theta Kappa International Alumni Association is to support and promote the people, programs and priorities of the Phi Theta Kappa Society, fostering and encouraging the communication and affiliation among all alumni and friends. These alumni and friends have valuable contributions to make to this Association through continuing the experience of fellowship by working with others who have shared in the Phi Theta Kappa experience. Together the alumni and friends can help insure a bright future for a new generation of scholars and leaders (“International Alumni Benefits and Guidelines,” n.d., ¶ 1).

It is clear from this mission that even as alumni; members of the Society are expected to help develop the current members, or followers of Phi Theta Kappa in becoming future servant

leaders. The alumni associations throughout Phi Theta Kappa illustrate Greenleaf's basic premise that servant leaders should not only serve others, but should also encourage and support the development of followers in becoming future servant leaders (Greenleaf, 2002). These experiences, both as active Phi Theta Kappans, and as alumni members, help to develop the worker of the new millennium, workers who have different expectations of the workplace than previous generations. In the past, "leadership wasn't about service. It was about power. Supervisors were more interested in 'serve us' than in service. To wield power, bosses used any means available, including hoarding information. After all, knowledge is power" (Ramsey, 2005, p. 3). This has changed, and the new worker of modern times "want and expect respect, autonomy and a piece of the action" (Ramsey, 2005, p. 4). Employers and managers in this new environment have to support, nurture and protect followers (Ramsey, 2005; Izzo & Withers, 2001) in order to keep workers and their knowledge at the organization. Servant leadership therefore, becomes more than a catch-phrase or buzzword. Servant leadership becomes the avenue by which individuals develop into the sophisticated followers and organizational members who can make the difference between mediocre organizational performance and outstanding organizational performance.

## CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

Research methodology that will be used in exploring the level of perceived servant leadership behaviors in Phi Theta Kappa, by the student officers will be explained in this chapter. The research design, population frame, sampling procedures, coding, data collection and analysis, as well as a description of the survey instrument and focus group procedures will be discussed.

### Methodology

As discussed in Chapter One, the research questions for this project are:

1. Are servant leadership behaviors perceived by the student officers within Phi Theta Kappa?
2. Is there a connection between the level of servant leadership behaviors being perceived by the student officers and their level of satisfaction with their position in the organization?
3. Do these perceptions change according to the study demographic variables?

The study demographic variables for this project are: the number of chapter advisors in the student officer's chapter, the number of officers currently serving in the chapter, the level of chapter activity as measured by the Society's five-star system, the divisional affiliation of the chapter, and the size of the college where the chapter is located.

### *The Focus Group Phase*

There were two phases of this research project. The first consisted of a focus group held at a New England Region leadership conference in September of 2006. Focus groups can be defined in a variety of ways, yet one of the more intriguing definitions combines the idea of a focus group as a method to collect data, which uses participant interaction as a source of that data, as well as recognizing the importance of the moderator in that process (McLafferty, 2004; Whitney, 2005). Another interpretation is that focus groups have six characteristics, which originally were identified by Krueger in 1988 (Turney & Pocknee, 2005). These six characteristics are that focus groups: involve people, are conducted in a series, include relatively homogenous participants who are unfamiliar with other members, collect data, the data are qualitative, and are involved with a focused discussion (Turney & Pocknee, 2005). The definition is expansive, yet not all published studies use focus groups that fit all six characteristics (McLafferty, 2004). It is interesting to note that while Turney and Pocknee (2005) indicated that participants should be unfamiliar with other members, McLafferty (2004) recommended that members should know one another, as groups made up of members who were familiar with each other were more likely to interact with each other.

Focus groups have been borrowed from their use in marketing efforts to find out information on a variety of issues (McLafferty, 2004; Tapping into the Potential, 2004). They are extremely important tools for researchers attempting to “gain a deeper understanding of issues” (Whitney, 2005, p. 4). Useful focus groups can occur in a single meeting, or in a series of meetings, however it is recommended that if a series is used, that they range from three to no more than twelve sessions (McLafferty, 2004), and some researchers indicate that saturation of information can be seen with as little as three or four different groups (Morgan, 1996). Size of the focus

group can also be debated, and “a systematic evaluation of relationships between sample size and effectiveness in group interviews might enable novice researchers to make more informed decisions” (McLafferty, 2004, p. 190). Moderators are a necessity in a focus group, although a professional moderator may be used rather than the researcher him/herself (McLafferty, 2004). The moderator creates a safe environment for dialogue, as well as uses a variety of communication techniques designed to probe for additional information, transition between ideas and at the same time, not interfere with the communication exchange process (McLafferty, 2004).

While focus groups provide a rich source of data, they can also be used with other forms of research, such as in-depth interviews or surveys as they provide insight into the information gathered from surveys alone (Morgan, 1996). In order to obtain benefit from a focus group, it is recommended that clear objectives on what is to be accomplished are set and that participants are carefully selected (Davis, 2002; Turauskas & Vaitkuniene, 2004).

The focus group for this research consisted of chapter and regional student officers from the New England region, who volunteered to participate. The researcher acted as the focus group leader. After a brief introduction into the concept of servant leadership, as defined by Robert K. Greenleaf, questions were asked that were based on Dr. James Laub’s Organizational Leadership Assessment instrument. The conversation was audiotape and notes were taken to ensure that an accurate representation of the focus group was reported. The group size was originally limited to 12 participants, although it was still conducted even though only 5 student officers actually participated. The questions that were asked are:

1. In general, do people in Phi Theta Kappa:
  - a. Show trust to members?

- b. Demonstrate integrity?
  - c. Value differences in culture, race and ethnicity?
  - d. Accept people as they are?
2. Do advisors, regional coordinators and headquarters' staff:
- a. Use persuasion to influence members?
  - b. Promote open communication?
  - c. Provide the support and resources needed to help members reach their goals?
  - d. Encourage members to exercise leadership?
  - e. Encourage members to work together?
  - f. Put the needs of the members ahead of their own?
3. Do you, as a student officer of Phi Theta Kappa:
- a. Feel appreciated by your advisor, regional coordinator and headquarters' staff?
  - b. Feel good about your contributions to Phi Theta Kappa?
  - c. Use your best gifts and abilities in your role as a student officer?

These questions are based on questions asked on the OLA, and in most cases have been modified slightly to reflect the role of the respondent and Phi Theta Kappa exclusively. This allowed for both a deeper understanding of the results from the OLA survey, as well as a comparison of results between the focus group and the OLA survey respondent data. It was hoped that by using both a focus group and a survey a more complete picture of what was currently being perceived within the organization was developed.

#### *Validity Concerns*

Validity is a concern for any research, but the focus group phase of this research deserves special consideration as validity in qualitative research is controversial due to its very nature

(Winter, 2000). The initial phase of a qualitative study is especially concerned with descriptive validity, which is the concern that what was observed is what is actually reported (Winter, 2000). The focus group phase of this research ensured descriptive validity by the use of an audio tape recorder. This eliminated the possibility of the researcher forgetting or incorrectly interpreting exact words. Additionally, every effort was made to use direct quotes, rather than paraphrasing when reporting the data.

Interpretative validity is concerned with the accurate interpretation of data (Winter, 2000), and again, the use of direct quotes rather than paraphrasing helped ensure that interpretation was kept to a minimum. Theoretical validity is concerned with credibility and defensibility of the data (Validity Issues in Qualitative Research, n.d.). Careful construction of the questions asked, accurate reporting of responses and identification of limitations was deemed to be sufficient in addressing this issue.

It must be noted that this data is not to be interpreted as being able to be generalized beyond the focus group itself. Since the purpose of the focus group is to provide some clues into the survey phase of this research, trends that are identified were carefully described to be possible clues into the survey results, rather than definitive correlations. Finally, the researcher limits the discussion of the results to the sample population and the specific population of frame of Phi Theta Kappa student officers to ensure that evaluative validity is ensured. The use of an audio tape recorder, direct quotes, and careful reporting addressed and ensured that each component of validity is addressed.

### *The Survey Phase*

The second phase of this project consisted of the Organizational Leadership Assessment survey instrument being distributed to a sample of student officers within Phi Theta Kappa.

Because the focus group phase of this project was conducted in the New England region, this region was eliminated from the sampling frame for the survey. Responses to the OLA were collected online and by hard copies being mailed to the researcher and were converted to a database that was analyzed with SPSS software.

Phi Theta Kappa provided the researcher with the e-mail and mailing addresses of all current student officers in the fall of 2006, excluding those from the New England region. A systematic sample was drawn by choosing every tenth entry in this database of e-mail addresses. The sample received an e-mail, inviting their participation in this project, which contained instructions on accessing a secured Web site where the OLA was accessible. Responses were low, so second and a third e-mail invitations were sent, along with a hard copy of all information through the regular US Postal Office. Additionally, in an attempt to increase participation, Phi Theta Kappa's Executive Director sent an e-mail to all possibly affected student officers' advisors requesting that they encourage their student officers to participate. Completed instruments were analyzed using SPSS software to discover trends among respondents.

## Population and Sampling

### *The Focus Group*

The focus group was held at the New England regional leadership conference in September of 2006. There are two conferences annually, one being held in late September and the second being held in late October. The New England region consists of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont, and has 58 chapters ("Phi Theta Kappa Pinnacle Scholarship Award Program," n.d., ¶ 1). Not all chapters attend leadership conferences, and leadership conference attendance averaged at around 40 members from 10

chapters in 2005. Typically, when attendees register, they are given a conference packet containing a daily schedule and handout materials. To encourage participation in this focus group, attendees were handed a separate flyer announcing that a focus group would be held and that volunteers are encouraged to attend. This flyer included a brief overview of the purpose of the focus group as well as an informed consent letter to be signed and turned in at the focus group.

Participation was originally limited to 12 volunteers, although the focus group was held even though only 5 student officers participated. Because this focus group was held in the New England region of Phi Theta Kappa and consisted of volunteer attendees, it was considered a convenience sample; however, this focus group still provided useful information regarding the perception of servant leadership behaviors in Phi Theta Kappa.

#### *OLA Instrument Survey*

After the focus group was conducted, a systematic sample was taken from the database of student officer e-mail addresses provided by Phi Theta Kappa for this project. E-mail addresses from student officers in the New England region were eliminated from the database prior to it being sent to the researcher to prevent any possibility of a student officer participating in both phases of this research.

Phi Theta Kappa has over 1,100 chapters in 29 regions. It is estimated that each chapter has 3 officers with e-mail addresses reported to Phi Theta Kappa in 2006. When the New England region is eliminated from this, there are approximately 1,042 chapters contained in the sampling frame. If each chapter has an average of 3 officers with registered e-mails, it was anticipated that the sampling frame would consist of 3,126 officers. Conducting a systematic sample of every tenth entry would provide over 300 individuals in the sample, who would

receive an invitation to participate in this project. In actuality, the database contained 2, 272 entries, so the systematic sample then contained 272 entries. Because there are five demographic variables (number of chapter advisors in the student officer's chapter, the number of officers currently serving in the chapter, the level of chapter activity as measured by the Society's five-star system, the divisional affiliation of the chapter, and the size of the college where the chapter is located) 272 participants is more than adequate as Robson (2001) indicated that a common rule of thumb is 15 respondents for each variable is acceptable. Following this rule of thumb, 75 respondents would be necessary for a study. Identifying 272 subjects as the sample group would allow for a more in-depth analysis and provide room for subjects who choose not to participate. The number of 272 participants for the sample was also deemed adequate given the size of the total population. Because only 52 responses were received, analysis was limited and generalizations beyond the sample cannot be made.

### Instrumentation

The focus group phase of this study did not require the use of an instrument. The researcher asked a series of questions, as identified earlier, and the responses were recorded, analyzed and reported. The survey phase used the Organizational Leadership Assessment (OLA) instrument, designed by Dr. James Laub in 1988 ("OLA Group," n.d., ¶ 2). This instrument is a 66-question, Likert-type survey consisting of three sections. Each section asks that responses be marked as strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, or strongly agree.

The first section contains 21 questions, and asked respondents to rate each question, in relationship to the entire organization. The second section contains 33 questions, and asked respondents to rate each question as the respondent believed that it applies to the leadership of

the organization. The last section contains 12 questions, which asked the respondent to answer in regards to how the respondent felt about their personal role in the organization.

The OLA instrument was designed to rate an organization's health. According to Laub's Web page, there are six areas that characterize organizational health. He indicated that healthy organizations share leadership, value people, develop people, build communities, displays authenticity and provide leadership opportunities for members ("OLA Group," n.d.). These characteristics are the building blocks of what is found in the concept of servant leadership, as defined by Robert K. Greenleaf (2002). A copy of the OLA instrument is included in Appendix A. Dr. Laub's permission has been obtained to use this instrument in this study, and is included in Appendix B.

## Data Collection

### *Focus Group Phase*

The focus group was audiotaped and transcribed by the researcher. Comments were then categorized by common discussion themes. No identifying notations were made so that respondent identity is unknown. Prior to the focus group, an assistant verified that participants were chapter officers, by comparing the participant's name with the list of officers in the New England region database. One participant had not yet been sworn in as a student officer; however this student had been acting as a student officer and would be sworn in at the next meeting of this student's chapter. The decision was therefore made to allow this student to participate. Once in the focus group room, respondents were identified by first name only. Participants who wished to use alias were allowed to do so.

### *Survey Phase*

The survey phase of this study requires several separate areas of discussion. First, an e-mail was sent to the sample group of chapter officers. This e-mail was signed by the researcher and the Executive Director of Phi Theta Kappa was identified as a contact person for any questions that the participant might have. This e-mail informed respondents that they had been chosen by a systematic sample to participate in a research project to assess the levels of servant leadership behaviors perceived by student officers. This e-mail also explained that participation is voluntary and that only aggregate information will be published. This e-mail contained a link to a web-page, where the OLA was located. Only respondents who received the e-mail had access to this web page and a log-in was required.

The second phase began once respondent logged into the web page. Respondents found that the first page contained a consent form. Respondents were then required to check a box that indicated that by checking the box, respondent had agreed to participate in this research. Once the box was checked, the respondents were directed to the OLA instrument. To ensure that participation was completely voluntary, the respondents were able to exit the survey at any time. Once the survey was completed, the respondents were asked to click on a “submit survey” button. The respondents then saw a thank you for participating screen and the respondents could then exit the program.

The third phase began when surveys were received by the dedicated server. Data was downloaded daily to a database for analysis. It was estimated that two invitational e-mails would be needed in order to collect enough completed surveys. The second e-mail was sent approximately two weeks after the first one. Low response rates required that a third e-mail was sent approximately one month after the second e-mail was sent. Additionally, at this time surveys

were also sent by the US Postal Office and a separate e-mail was sent by Phi Theta Kappa's Executive Director to advisors, asking them to encourage their student officers to participate. Response rates were still low and only 52 surveys were collected.

### Data Analysis

The focus group phase of this project provided qualitative data, which has been found useful as a source of supplemental data for quantitative work, and as such, does not require extensive analysis (Robson, 2002). Since there was only one focus group, a large amount of data was not received. Therefore an immersion approach was used to dig out and identify trends. Use of a computer to identify these trends was not required as the focus group was of a small size.

The demographic portion of the survey was a multiple-choice single response scale, which provides nominal data. This portion required nonparametric tests, which can distinguish differences between the sub-populations of Phi Theta Kappa. The OLA, however, since it produces interval data, would have required parametric tests, if an adequate number of responses had been received. Because responses were low, descriptive statistics, Pearson's Correlations and Mann-Whitney tests were deemed sufficient to compare the different sub-populations in determining if there were differences in perceptions regarding servant leadership behaviors.

### Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are an important aspect of any research project. This section discusses the ethical considerations of this project and explains how these concerns are addressed.

### *Population*

The population for both the focus group phase and the survey phase are associate-degree students, who are student officers in Phi Theta Kappa. Students range from 18-75 years of age with no special characteristics. The focus group consisted of student officers in the New England region because this group was readily accessible to the researcher. While the researcher is active in the New England region, the focus group consisted of recently elected officers, who were unknown to the researcher. This ensured that any bias based on a relationship with the researcher was minimized if not eliminated.

The population for the survey phase consisted of student officers in all other regions. The New England region was eliminated from the sample frame to ensure that no respondent had a relationship with the researcher. The sample was a systematic sample taken from the sampling frame, by choosing every tenth entry from the Phi Theta Kappa e-mail student-officer e-mail database to ensure that the sample is a random sample.

### *Consent*

Student officers who volunteer for the focus group were presented with a consent form prior to entering the focus group room. These forms were distributed and collected by an assistant. Once inside the focus group room, participants were identified by a first name only.

Student officers who were selected and agreed to participate in the survey phase of the research project receive an e-mailed invitation, and in some cases both an e-mail invitation and an invitation by mail, which directed the volunteers to a dedicated web page or an enclosed survey instrument. The initial web page, and mailed packet contained a description of the study along with a consent form. Respondents were required to check a box indicating that they agree to participate prior to being directed to the OLA instrument. Participants who responded by mail

were asked to include the signed consent form when they mailed the survey instrument back to the researcher. All but two participants followed this request. It was deemed that the two who failed to include the consent form, did in fact consent to participate by the fact that they did complete and send the survey back to the researcher.

### *Inducements for Participation*

There were no inducements for student officers to participate in the focus group phase of the research. The focus group was offered during a New England region leadership conference, and the opportunity to participate was announced at the beginning of the program.

There was a drawing for a leadership book by Madeleine Albright from respondents who complete the survey phase of the research. Entry into the drawing was limited respondents who completed a separate application on the web page, or a separate sign-up sheet included in the mailed packet. For participants who completed the OLA online, the computer program prompted the respondent to a new page, where information was gathered for the drawing. This information was kept in a separate database to ensure that there was no linkage possible between the respondent's information and the individual survey information.

### *Risks and Benefits*

The focus group phase of the research included the risk of embarrassment to the respondents. This was minimized by the researcher emphasizing that the purpose of this research is to find out how student officers perceive servant leadership behaviors within Phi Theta Kappa. Specific names of advisors, coordinators or headquarter staff personnel were not be permitted.

Since the survey phase of this research was completed through internet technology and through the US Postal Service, and allowed for respondents to opt out of the project at any time, no risk is associated with this phase.

Individual benefits are not a part of this project. There were no benefits to respondents beyond feelings of satisfaction for participation. The only benefit for participating in the survey phase of this project was that respondents had the opportunity to enter into a drawing for a leadership book valued at \$25.95.

### *Deception*

This research did not include any deceptions of any kind, and is therefore not a consideration for ethical concerns.

### *Confidentiality*

Confidentiality of respondents was ensured during each phase of the research. Focus group participants' signed consent forms were collected prior to the focus group start and participant full names were not used during the discussion. Survey respondents were required to use a link to enter into the survey web page. Additionally, respondents were directed to a separate web page to enter into the drawing for the leadership book, or were instructed to include a separate entry form in their returned packet. This ensured that there was no linkage between the entry information and the answers.

Once data collected, both the written and electronically collected information will be maintained in a safety deposit box owned by the researcher for not less than 7 years. After the 7 year period, hard data will be shredded and the electronically stored data will be erased from the flash drive. The flash drive will then be destroyed.

### *Conflict of Interest*

Because the researcher is a volunteer advisor in the New England region of Phi Theta Kappa, a possible conflict of interest must be addressed. Specifically, the possibility of a role-related fiduciary duty could complicate this research. For this specific case, a conflict of interest

is in the realm of possibility, but was not deemed to be likely. First, the researcher is a volunteer advisor in Phi Theta Kappa, and does not receive any compensation, either financial or in any other regards, from the organization. Second, Phi Theta Kappa's Executive Director had approved Phi Theta Kappa being used as the target organization, but did not suggest it. The Executive Director had expressed an interest in receiving a copy of the results, but has not made any indications of expectations. Additionally, this researcher did not have any expectations of findings. Phi Theta Kappa's participation included approval of the focus group and with sharing a database of student officer e-mails. Phi Theta Kappa staff will not have any part or interest in the performance of this research.

The researcher's position, as a voluntary advisor was not affected by this research or by any findings from this project. As discussed earlier, the region where the researcher is located was used for the focus group, but not in the survey phase of the project. To protect focus group respondents, they were fully informed that the researcher was an advisor, and participation was strictly voluntary and would not include any officers from the advisor's chapter.

Finally, while the final research results were made available to Phi Theta Kappa, no respondent identifying information was provided to them. Only aggregate, statistical analysis and conclusions were provided.

#### *Ethical Considerations Conclusion*

In conclusion, to prevent ethical concerns from becoming issues, proper research protocol was employed to protect participant identification, ensure that participation was completely voluntary, and to ensure that there were no conflicts of interest. This research was also submitted to the Capella University's Institutional Review Board to ensure that all necessary precautions were employed throughout the project.

## CHAPTER 4. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

### Focus Group Phase

A focus group was conducted at the Northern New England Leadership Conference, on September 30, 2006. Attendees of the conference were provided with a flyer informing them of the focus group upon registration, and the researcher announced the focus group at the Welcome Meeting earlier that morning. Original plans included limiting participation to twelve individuals with the commitment to hold the focus group with fewer participants if needed. A total of 5 individuals chose to participate in the focus group. When the research was explained to the group, 2 participants indicated that they were current advisors and were therefore asked to leave. One of the remaining 5 participants one individual indicated that she was acting as an officer, but had not been sworn in as of yet. The researcher made the decision to allow her to participate.

The first part of the discussion included a review of the purpose of the research and a review of the consent form. Participants were asked to sign and date one copy of the form, and were provided a blank copy for their own information. Participants were also asked to avoid using personal names, both their own and of any individual that they discussed. Participants were told that their involvement was voluntary and therefore they could leave at any time. All of the participants remained for the entire hour.

### *Results*

The questions discussed in the focus group were:

1. In general, do people in Phi Theta Kappa:
  - a. Show trust to members?
  - b. Demonstrate integrity?

- c. Value differences in culture, race and ethnicity?
2. Do advisors, regional coordinators and headquarters' staff:
  - a. Use persuasion to influence members?
  - b. Promote open communication?
  - c. Provide the support and resources needed to help members reach their goals?
  - d. Encourage members to exercise leadership?
  - e. Encourage members to work together?
  - f. Put the needs of the members ahead of their own?
3. Do you, as a student officer of Phi Theta Kappa:
  - a. Feel appreciated by your advisor, regional coordinator and headquarters' staff?
  - b. Feel good about your contributions to Phi Theta Kappa?
  - c. Use your best gifts and abilities in your role as a student officer?

In response to the first question: in general, do people in Phi Theta Kappa show trust to members, the initial response included one student officers' explanation of how difficult it was to find information about Phi Theta Kappa on their college campus. This student indicated that she had to be very proactive in finding the chapter advisor and indicated her dissatisfaction with the college's lack of initiative. Once the researcher re-directed her discussion back to the issue of whether people in the organization show trust, she was very enthusiastic about being allowed to help choose the projects that the chapter would be involved in. Several other participants indicated similar experiences. One participant summed up the group's comments by saying, "The advisors have been there quite a while, been involved quite a while and they dish out assignments and let us on our way, trust us to get them done, follow up with us and pull everything together in the end." Another participant indicated that "my chapter like all of officers

are really new to the whole program, so for us it's just a learning experience on everything and we feel that we can trust each other; we have grown really close to each other." This struggle was a common one, and another participant said "from my chapter, we'll say trust really ties into teamwork and leadership skills and that's one of the main goals that we're trying to implement into our chapter, in, you know, following up on what was said. Our chapter too has suffered a really downhill during previous semesters." While not all participants verbally responded to this question, it was noted that non-verbal participants nodded their heads and otherwise acknowledged that the struggles of being new and working through chapter issues helped to build trust between chapter members.

The second question: in general, do people in Phi Theta Kappa demonstrate integrity, resulted in a variety of responses. One participant indicated that integrity is shown by how members followed through and "show your colors sort of speak." A second participant said "I'll say in general that they have. They are showing integrity because they gave us vast amounts of information to get the work done." Still a third participant received agreement from the entire group when she said:

I've looked into a lot of honor societies that I got invited to join. A lot of different honor societies and I chose this one based upon the think the things they offered to students. I feel you guys offered a lot to students and have a lot of support services for students and you're not just a number and a link more or less.

The next question asked: in general, do people in Phi Theta Kappa value differences in cultures, race and ethnicity? Responses to this question were very similar and respondents all indicated that their respective chapters mirrored the diversity they saw on their campuses.

Responses went from one participant saying, “I haven’t seen any problems with it,” to another student noting:

Everybody’s here for a reason and so I think the respect is due just because everybody’s put forth the effort to make it here, therefore we start to you know, that’s the common goal and that kind of holds us all together is that we’re very driven people.

A third participant tied this together and indicated, “I don’t think that people would get involved in this type of work or this type of society if they didn’t have integrity.”

The final question that related to the Society as a whole, asked: in general, do people in Phi Theta Kappa accept people as they are? This question received brief responses from nods to a quick “yeah” and “most definitely.” It is interesting to note that when the researcher asked the group to think about not only people in their chapter, but in the region and the Society as a whole, most students indicated that they did not really know people outside of their chapter. For this group, their first introduction to the regional coordinator, the regional advisory board members, or any member of the headquarters’ staff was occurring this weekend. Overall, responses could be interpreted to represent the participants’ experiences within their own chapter.

The second set of questions involved participants perceptions of their chapter advisors, regional coordinator and headquarters staff. Because of the earlier brief conversation of the participants’ limited exposure to others outside of their own chapters, responses must be viewed within the context of chapter involvement.

The first question of this set asked: do advisors, regional coordinators and headquarters’ staff use persuasion to influence members? One participant clearly identified the issue of limited involvement outside of their chapter and said, “I haven’t had much exposure to the other officers,

but from what I hear our advisors are totally awesome.” Another student spoke of her advisor and indicated that “he does recognize each student’s strength and I think it personally hurts him when a student doesn’t achieve their full potential.” Still another participant noted that the effort to get information out about Phi Theta Kappa and encouraging others to join the Society was an example of how persuasion was being used.

When asked if advisors, regional coordinators and headquarters’ staff promote open communication, responses were once again brief, but positive. Responses ranged from a simple yes, to “they want to be pestered, they want to be called.”

Answers to the next question were brief as well. In response to the question, do advisors, regional coordinators and headquarters’ staff provide the support and resources needed to help members reach their goals, participants discussed the wealth of information provided on the Society’s Web site and how strong leadership provided students with opportunities for success.

In response to the question asking if advisors, regional coordinators and headquarters’ staff encourage members to exercise leadership, participants indicated that for the most part, members were allowed to move at their own pace, but three participants spoke of advisors giving them a kick when needed.

More discussion occurred in response to the question asking if advisors, regional coordinators and headquarters’ staff encouraged members to work together. Participants spoke about how the advisors encouraged committee work, or how advisors were more observers in the running of meetings until needed. One participant noted that the committee work was necessary because of how busy students were in their ordinary lives, and that this fact encouraged the need for teamwork.

Discussion was brief when the participants were asked if their advisors, regional coordinators and headquarters' staff put the needs of the members first. One participant said "yeah" and a second participant agreed. No other participant volunteered information so the next question was asked. In response to the question regarding how appreciated the officers felt, there was greater discussion with participants eager to talk of his or her advisor. One participant indicated that "I include our advisors in so many things, always; I'm just with him all the time." This participant went on to say that:

The active students are involved in every possible thing they could be, so we all do work together and our advisor always keeps us involved at every level, even if it means we have to do something and need to go to another teacher and tell them that he needs to cut us some slack for a minute, he will do that. He will go to the president of the college; he will go to the dean. He will go wherever it takes to ensure that point A is not affecting point B, or you know what I mean.

It was interesting to note that one participant indicated that she was asked by the college president to choose the advisor. This participant also indicated that her advisor pushes students to get more involved in the Society and in their college as a whole.

The greatest number of responses was in regards to the question asking if the officers felt good about their contributions to Phi Theta Kappa. Students excitedly talked about the various programs suggested by the Society, including the literacy program, the partnership with the American Cancer Society and Project Green, which is a partnership with the Keep America Beautiful organization. Participants discussed the work their chapter had already done with these projects, the hardships they had encountered and their solutions to individual problems with completion. The excitement of this discussion lead the researcher to believe that the link of how

participants felt about Phi Theta Kappa as a whole was closely tied into their own successes in participating with the programs that touched them the closest.

The final question asked was, did they use their best gifts and abilities in their role as a student officer. One respondent summed up the focus group session by saying, “I think they push it out of you. If you have no other way of bringing it out, they bring it out of you. They bring out the best of you. They expect the best and they get the best.”

### Focus Group Analysis

The focus group discussion involved a series of questions related to the survey that was sent to student officers outside of the New England region. From reviewing the notes and recording of this focus group, two general themes emerged.

The first theme that became evident was voiced throughout the focus group. Overall, participants spoke more of their involvement and their motivation than they did of others behaviors and perceived attitudes. This indicated a trend towards the participants transferring their beliefs of their own behaviors and attitudes on others. Participants were very vocal about how active they were in getting information from their colleges about Phi Theta Kappa, and how their personal motivation resulted in increased chapter involvement. Quite often, the researcher needed to refocus the group to discuss their perceptions of others, rather than their perceptions of themselves. When the discussion involved how appreciated and valued the participants felt in their positions, participants indicated that their opinions were often sought after by advisors and college administrators. Additionally, most participants had discussed how they needed to be proactive in their work with the chapter, to the point of seeking out the advisor, or being the

person to look for information on the Society's Web page. This highlighted the earlier theme of the responses being more internally-based rather than externally based.

The participants did speak about their advisors and their teams, but indicated that they had just met their regional coordinator, regional officers and anyone from the Society's headquarters' staff. This made the researcher wonder how accurate the participants could be about the organization as a whole, when their involvement was limited to their specific chapters.

These two themes, the first being how inwardly focused the participants were, and the second of how student officers are separated from people outside of their chapters, gave the researcher the impression that responses from the student officers would only provide a picture of one part of the overall Society, however, because of the emphasis on servant-leadership throughout Phi Theta Kappa, this impression is a valuable one.

### Survey Phase

Phi Theta Kappa provided a spreadsheet containing the names, mailing addresses and e-mail addresses of all student officers currently serving in the organization. Because of the researcher's involvement with the New England region, all student officers from chapters within this region were eliminated from the spreadsheet, prior to the researcher obtaining it. The spreadsheet contained 2,727 entries. The researcher conducted a systematic sampling procedure, where every tenth entry was highlighted and used for the sample group. Therefore, the sample group contained 272 entries. Over a period of three months, an e-mailed invitation was sent to the members of the sample group a total of three times. The first two attempts yielded dismal results, so the Executive Director sent an e-mail to the advisors throughout Phi Theta Kappa, informing them that the research was authorized by Phi Theta Kappa and that student officer

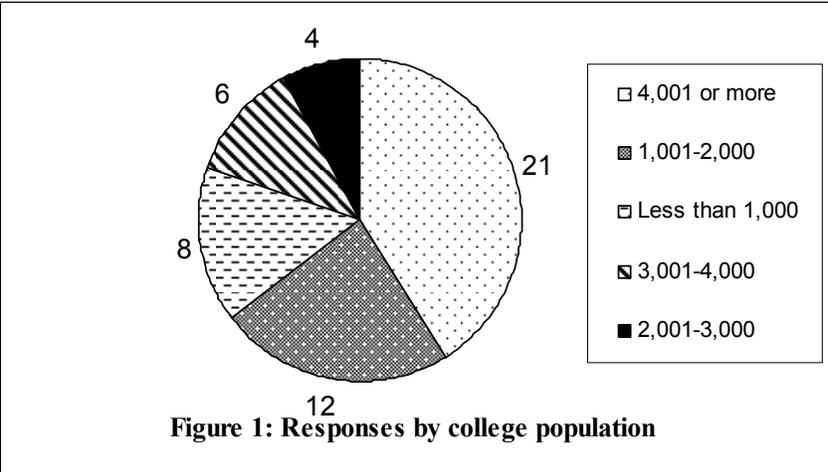
participation would be appreciated. A third e-mail was then sent out to members of the sample group who had not yet responded. Response was still low, so all sample members who had still not responded were mailed the survey through the U.S. Postal service. After three more weeks, a total of 52 surveys had been received. This number represents a response rate of 19%.

While 52 surveys were received, only 40 were complete. Of the 12 records that were incomplete, a total of 18 fields were left blank. Because there was a possible 3,672 fields available from the 52 records, these 18 blank fields represented less than 1% of the available fields.

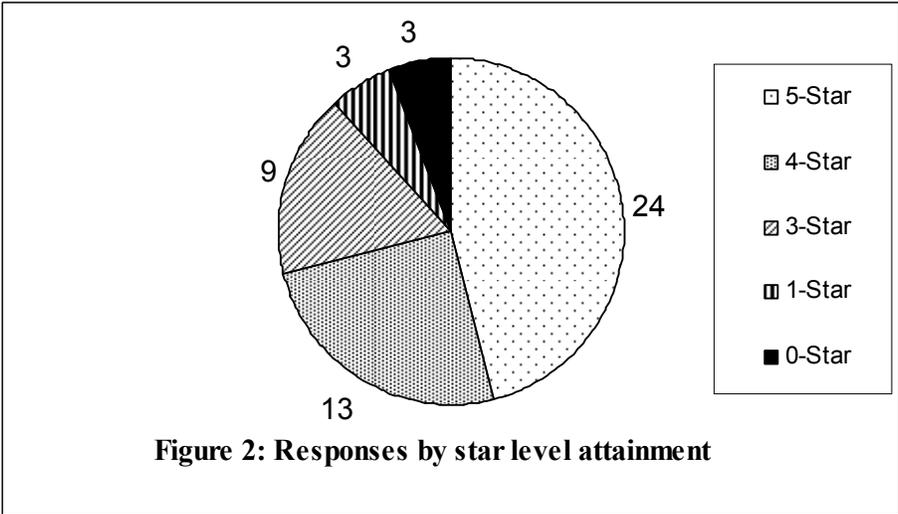
#### *Description of the Participants*

Demographic information was collected for each survey. Participants were asked to indicate the student population of their college, the level of participation the chapter had earned according to the Phi Theta Kappa five-star system, the number of advisors in their chapter, the number of student officers serving in their chapter, and their chapter's regional affiliation.

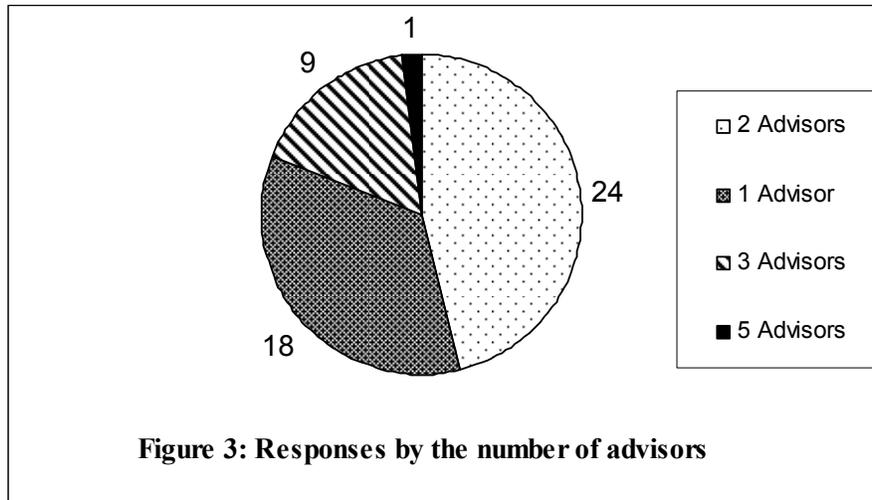
Overall, 21 participants (40%) were associated with colleges that had student populations of over 4,000 students. Twelve participants (23%) were associated with colleges with student populations between 1,001 to 2,000 students. Eight participants (15%) were associated with colleges with student populations of less than 1,000. Six participants (12%) were associated with colleges that had student populations between 3,001 and 4,000 students. Four participants (8%) were associated with colleges that had student populations between 2,001 and 3,000 students, and finally one participant (2%) did not indicate the size of the college he or she was associated with.



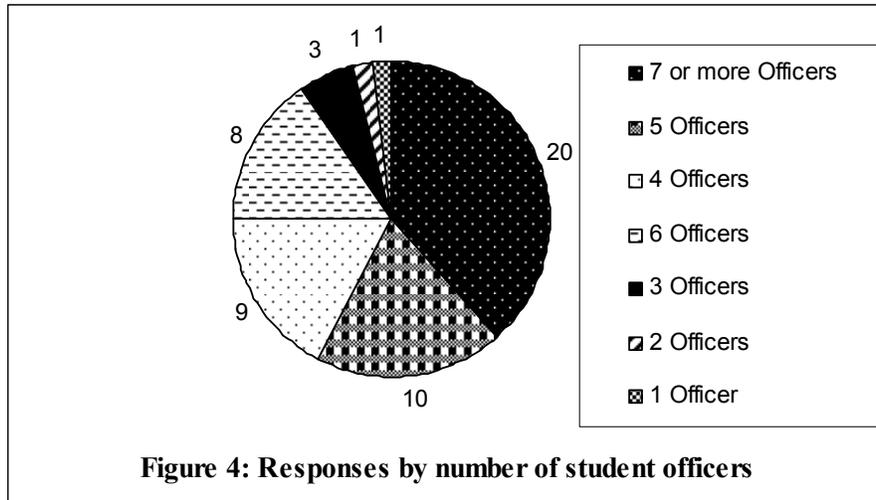
All participants reported a star-level that their chapter had reached. Twenty-four participants (46%) indicated that their chapter had obtained a five-star level. Thirteen participants (25%) indicated that their chapter had obtained a four-star level. Nine participants (17%) indicated that their chapter had obtained a three-star level. Three participants (6%) indicated that their chapter had reached a one-star level and the final three participants (6%) indicated that their chapters had not obtained any stars in the five-star program.



All participants reported the number of advisors in their chapters. Twenty-four participants (46%) reported that their chapters had 2 advisors. Eighteen participants (35%) reported that their chapters had one advisor. Nine participants (17%) reported that their chapters had three advisors, and 1 participant (2%) reported that their chapter had 5 advisors.



All participants reported the number of student officers serving within their chapters. Twenty participants (38%) indicated that their chapters had 7 or more student officers. Ten participants (19%) indicated that their chapters had 5 student officers. Nine participants (17%) indicated that their chapters had 4 student officers. Eight participants (15%) indicated that their chapters had 6 student officers. Three participants (6%) indicated that their chapters had 3 student officers. One participant (2%) indicated that their chapter had 2 student officers, and 1 participant indicated that their chapter had just one student officer.



Regional affiliation was at times left blank, but this information was easily obtained by the researcher by checking the return address or the chapter name which had been provided by the respondents. This information was used to locate the region to which the chapter was affiliated with.

Overall, 9 participants (18%) were from the Middle States region. Four participants (8%) were from each of the following regions: Alabama, the Greater Northwest region, Texas, and Virginia. Three participants (6%) were from each of the following regions: Nevada/California, New York, and Ohio. Two participants (4%) were from each of the following regions: Carolinas, Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Minn-Wi-Kota, and Oklahoma/Arkansas. Finally, 1 participant (2%) was from each of the following regions: Georgia, Michigan, Missouri, Mississippi/Louisiana, Rocky Mountain/Cascade, and Tennessee.

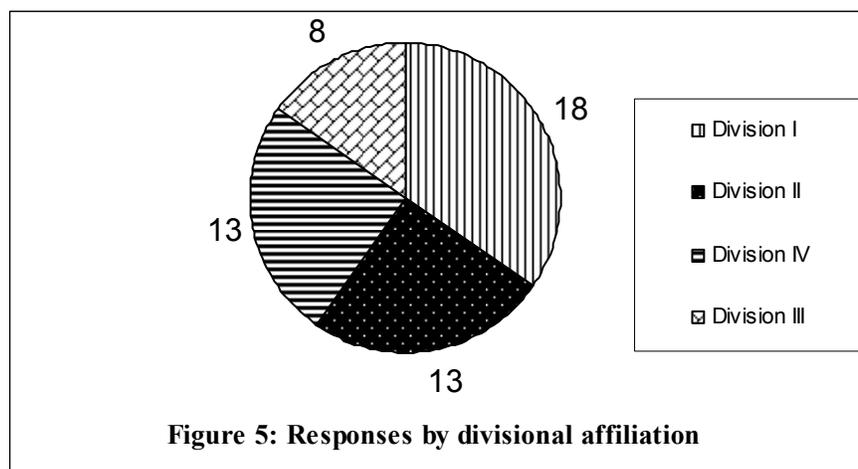
#### *Recoding the Demographic Variables*

It was decided that some demographic variables needed to be recoded for statistical analysis. The most important recoding involved the regional affiliation demographic. There are

29 regions in Phi Theta Kappa. Surveys were not sent to student officers in the New England region, so 28 regions could have been reached with the sample used, and in fact, surveys from all remaining 28 regions were received. Because there were only 52 participants however, the decision was made to recode the regions into larger groups. Phi Theta Kappa is organized into approximately 1,200 chapters, which are organized into 29 regions and finally into 4 divisions. The researcher recoded the regional affiliations into the 4 divisions as recognized by the Society.

Division I includes the following regions: Carolina, Middle States, New England, New York, Ohio and Virginia. Division II includes: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi/Louisiana, Tennessee and Texas. Division III includes: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minn-Wi-Kota, Missouri, Oklahoma/Arkansas, and the Greater Northwest. Division IV includes: Arizona, Colorado, Nebraska/Wyoming, Nevada/California, New Mexico, Pacific, and Rocky Mountains/Cascade.

When participants were recoded according to Divisions, 18 participants (35%) were from Division I; 13 participants (25%) were from Division II; 8 participants (15%) were from Division III; and 13 (25%) were from Division IV.



The size of the student population that the participants' chapter was associated with was also recoded. The original coding classified college population on a 1-5 scale. The recoding identified 1 as colleges with student populations that were less than 2,000, and identified 2 as colleges with student populations that were greater than 3,001. This would allow for analysis between small and large colleges.

A similar recoding was done for the activity level of the chapter. Originally, star levels were reported on a 0-5 scale, which corresponded to the Society's Five Star system. Recoding put chapters that had obtained 0 through 2 stars under a code of 1, and chapters that had obtained 4-5 stars under a code of 2. Recoding allowed for comparisons of highly active chapters to relatively sedate chapters.

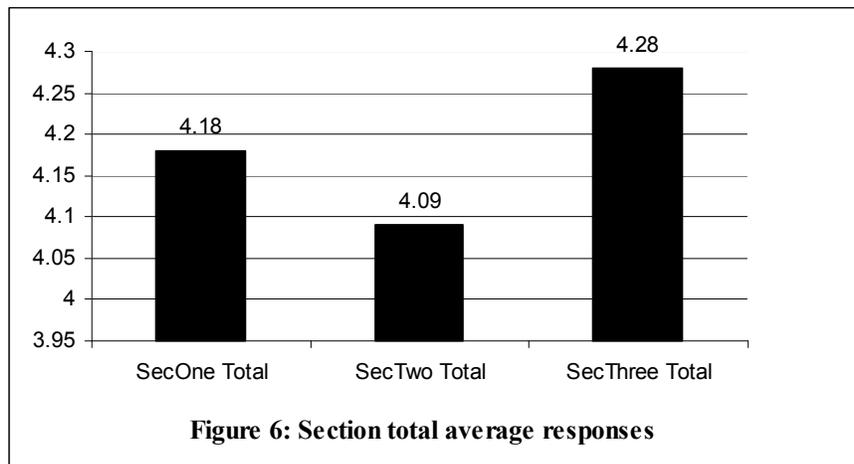
It was also decided to recode the number of student officers in the participants' chapter. Chapters that were previously coded with 1 or 2 student officers were now coded with a 1, and chapters with 5, 6, 7 or more student officers were coded with a 2. This permitted chapters with only one or two officers to be compared against chapters with a high number of student officers.

It was decided not to recode the demographic variable of the number of advisors in the participants' chapters because the spread was not as great as with the other variables. Most participants indicated that their chapters had 1 or 2 advisors (42), 9 participants indicated that their chapter had 3 advisors, and only one participant indicated that their chapter had 5 advisors.

The survey itself was recoded to allow for additional analysis on the three sections of the OLA. The first section of the OLA asked for participants to respond to each question in regards to the entire organization. Therefore questions 1 through 21 were recoded into a combined sum and named SecOneTotal. Questions 22 through 54 were recoded into a combined sum and named SecTwoTotal, which asked participants to respond to each question in regards to the

leadership of the organization. Questions 55 through 66 were recoded into a combined sum and named SecThreeTotal. This section asked participants to respond in accordance to how the question related to them as individuals.

Answers for each section were averaged for each question, and again for the entire section. The average score for SecOneTotal questions was 4.18, with the range of answers being a low of 3.77 to a high of 4.56. The average score for SecTwoTotal questions was 4.09, with the range of answers starting at a low of 3.65 and ending with a high score of 4.38. SecThreeTotal average score was 4.28, with a range of answers between a low of 4.10 to a high score of 4.44.



### *Pearson's Correlations*

Pearson's correlations were run to determine the relationship between the variables and the relationship between survey answers. According to Field, the Pearson's correlation "is a standardized measure of the strength of relationship between two variables (2005, p. 740-741). The first correlation that was run looked at the original coding for the demographic variables. The only significant correlation (.413) noted was that the demographic variable of college size

was related to the number of student officers in the chapter. A similar correlation was run using the recoded demographic variables. Using the recoded variables, the only significant correlation (.469) was with the variables of star level (high or low) with the number of student officers in the chapter (few or many).

A correlation was also run using the recoded variables, the original number of advisors variable, and the section totals. Once again the demographics of student officers and college size remained at .469. It was interesting to note that the various sections of the OLA were marked as significant to each other. SecOneTotal was correlated to SecTwoTotal with a score of .627. SecOneTotal was correlated to SecThreeTotal with a score of .739. SecTwoTotal was correlated to SecThreeTotal with a score of .654.

Another correlation was run using just the answers to the OLA. Significant correlations above the .700 score were many, however it was noted that questions only correlated to other questions within the same section of the OLA. For example, no questions in Section One correlated with questions from any other section with scores above .700. There were so many correlations at or above the .700 level, that only correlations above .800 will be discussed.

Section One covered the entire organization and consisted of 21 questions. There were only two correlations noted. Question 10, "In general, people within this organization demonstrate high integrity & honesty" ("OLA," p. 2), correlated with question 11, "In general, people within this organization are trustworthy" ("OLA," p. 2), with a score of .824. Question 14, "In general, people within this organization are held accountable for reaching work goals" ("OLA," p.2), correlated with question 15, "In general, people within this organization are aware of the needs of others" ("OLA," p.2), with a score of .811.

Section Two of the OLA covered the leadership of the organization and contained 33 questions. Question 53, “Managers/supervisors and top leadership in the organization do not seek after special status or the perks of leadership” (“OLA,” p. 3) correlated with 4 questions. This question correlated with question 39, “Managers/supervisors and top leadership within this organization do not demand special recognition for being leaders” (“OLA,” p.3) with a score of .864. This same question correlated with question 48, “Managers/supervisors and top leadership of this organization are humble—they do not promote themselves” (“OLA,” p. 4) with a score of .830. Question 53 also correlated with question 49, “Managers/supervisors and top leadership in this organization communicate clear plans & goals for the organization” (“OLA,” p. 4) with a score of .830. Finally, question 53 correlated with question 54, “Managers/supervisors and top leadership within this organization put the needs of the workers ahead of their own” (“OLA,” p. 4), with a score of .803.

Additional correlations in Section Two include a correlation of question 46, “Managers/supervisors and top leadership in this organization build people up through encouragement and affirmation” (“OLA,” p. 4), with question 51, “Managers/supervisors and top leadership in this organization are accountable & responsible to others” (“OLA,” p. 4) with a score of .857. Question 46 also correlated with question 52, “Managers/supervisors and top leadership in this organization are receptive listeners” (“OLA,” p. 4), with a score of .810. Finally, question 32, “Managers/supervisors and top leadership in this organization are open to receiving criticism & challenge from others” (“OLA,” p. 3) correlate with question 43, “Managers/supervisors and top leadership in this organization honestly evaluate themselves before seeking to evaluate others” (“OLA,” p. 3) with a score of .822.

Section Three of the OLA sought information in how the participants perceived their own role in the organization and contained 12 questions. Question 61, “In viewing my own role I trust the leadership of this organization” (“OLA,” p. 4) correlated with question 62, “In viewing my own role I enjoy working in this organization” (“OLA,” p. 4) with a score of .824. Question 61 also correlated with question 63, “In viewing my own role I am respected by those above me in the organization” (“OLA,” p. 4) with a score of .858.

#### *Mann-Whitney Analysis*

Mann-Whitney tests were run for each variable to determine the differences between the two independent variables (Field, 2005). In most cases, it was determined that there was no support that the responses were tied to the variables in responses for Sections One or Two of the OLA. Some support was found for responses to be tied to the demographic variables for Section Three of the OLA, but for most cases this was not at the 0.05 significance level.

The first example of this would be the demographic for college size. In examining large colleges against small colleges, the P-values for each section of the OLA did not indicate support that responses would differ by the size of the college. Section One of the OLA ( $P = 0.789$ ,  $U = 205.500$ ), Section Two ( $P = 0.485$ ,  $U = 180.500$ ), and Section Three ( $P = 0.663$ ,  $U = 211.500$ ) all indicated that responses were not significant.

The results for the demographic of star-level attainment did show some support that responses did differ for participants whose chapters attained 0-2 stars from participants whose chapters attained a rating of 4-5 stars in Section Three of the OLA ( $P = 0.048$ ,  $U = 6.000$ ). This was not the case in Section One of the OLA ( $P = 0.549$ ,  $U = 38.000$ ), or in Section Two ( $P = 0.121$ ,  $U = 10.500$ ).

Similar results were found in for the variable of the number of student officers in the participants' chapters. Responses from participants whose chapters had few student officers did not differ significantly from responses from participants whose chapters had more student officers in Section One ( $P = 0.861$ ,  $U = 30.500$ ) or in Section Two ( $P = 0.917$ ,  $U = 32.500$ ), but did in Section Three ( $P = 0.173$ ,  $U = 14.500$ ). However, the results were not significant at the 0.05 level.

Because the number of advisors ranged from 1 to 3 in all but one response, this variable was not recoded. Mann-Whitney tests were run comparing chapters with 1 advisor with chapters with 2 advisors, and again with chapters with 3 advisors. Mann-Whitney tests were also run comparing chapters with 2 advisors, with chapters that had 3 advisors. When comparing responses from participants' whose chapters had 1 advisor against those with 2 advisors, responses in Section One ( $P = 0.810$ ,  $U = 175.000$ ) and Section Two ( $P = 0.916$ ,  $U = 164.500$ ) did not indicate that responses were linked to this variable. However, as in other analysis, some support for this variable was seen in Section Three Responses ( $P = 0.215$ ,  $U = 160.000$ ), again, however, this was not at the 0.05 significance level.

Results were quite different when comparing the results from participants' whose chapters had 1 advisor versus those that had 3 advisors. In this analysis, Section One ( $P = 0.175$ ,  $U = 35.50$ ) and Section Two ( $P = 0.264$ ,  $U = 45.000$ ) showed more significance than responses for Section Three ( $P = 0.745$ ,  $U = 57.000$ ). Again, no significance at the 0.05 level was determined.

Results comparing responses from participants whose chapters had 2 advisors, from those whose chapters had 3 advisors were similar to the comparison for responses from participants whose chapters had 1 or 3 advisors. Section One ( $P = 0.311$ ,  $U = 59.500$ ), and Section Two ( $P =$

0.549,  $U = 71.500$ ) were both closer to the 0.05 significance level than Section Three ( $P = 0.774$ ,  $U = 74.000$ ), although again, none of the results were close to the 0.05 level.

The demographic of divisional affiliation was analyzed by comparing responses from Division I to Division II, Division III, and Division IV. Division II was then compared to Division III and Division IV. Division III was finally compared to Division IV. In most cases, support for responses being different by divisional affiliation was not found.

Support for responses being linked to divisional affiliation was not found when comparing responses from Division I to responses from Division II in any section of the OLA. Section One ( $P = 0.551$ ,  $U = 68.000$ ), Section Two ( $P = 0.945$ ,  $U = 94.000$ ), and Section Three ( $P = 0.267$ ,  $U = 81.500$ ) were not significant. Results were similar when comparing responses from Division I to Division III. Section One ( $P = 0.834$ ,  $U = 60.500$ ), Section Two ( $P = 0.492$ ,  $U = 45$ ) and Section Three ( $P = 0.244$ ,  $U = 43.000$ ) did not show significance. Responses from Division I as compared to responses from Division IV showed similar results. Section One ( $P = 0.559$ ,  $U = 90.500$ ), Section Two ( $P = 0.716$ ,  $U = 80.000$ ), and Section Three ( $P = 0.415$ ,  $U = 88.000$ ) did not show significance.

Significance was found in the analysis of responses from Division II versus responses from Division III. While Sections One ( $P = 0.829$ ,  $U = 37.500$ ), and Section Two ( $P = 0.432$ ,  $U = 32.000$ ) were not significant, Section Three ( $P = 0.045$ ,  $U = 18.500$ ) was significant at the 0.05 level. This was the most significant finding for the demographic Mann-Whitney analysis.

Responses from Division II as compared against responses from Division IV did not show significance for Section One ( $P = 0.976$ ,  $U = 64.500$ ), Section Two ( $P = 0.880$ ,  $U = 63.500$ ), or for Section Three ( $P = 0.997$ ,  $U = 71.000$ ).

Significance was again found in the analysis of responses from Division III versus responses from Division IV. While Sections One ( $P = 0.804$ ,  $U = 48.000$ ) and Two ( $P = 0.724$ ,  $U = 34.500$ ) did not show significance, Section Three ( $P = 0.056$ ,  $U = 19.500$ ) did.

### Overall Interpretation of the Analysis

Results from the focus group indicated that participants did not have the involvement outside of their own chapters necessary to truly respond to questions that asked about behaviors at the regional or international level. This theme was supported by the Mann-Whitney results that showed no significance in responses to the OLA that asked questions that related to the entire organization, or to top leadership. Some significance was reported however, in responses to Section Three of the OLA that sought information about the participants' role. Even with this consideration, overall scores for the survey were generally high, with the lowest score for any one question being in the undecided category and most other responses being between the agree category and the strongly agree category. It was noted that the highest scores were in Section Three of the OLA, which again, is supported by the Mann-Whitney significance in this section, and by the results of the focus group.

It must be noted however, that results are limited by the low number of participants in both the focus group phase and in the survey phase of this study. Had participation been higher, different results might have been found. The reason for the low response rate is not known, however, if the reason for the low participation rate could have been discovered, that might have provided an interesting conclusion in itself.

## CHAPTER 5. RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Results

The purpose of this research was to determine if servant leadership behaviors are prevalent in Phi Theta Kappa. Phi Theta Kappa's stated purpose is "to recognize and encourage scholarship among two-year college students" (*Chapter Manual*, 2006, p. 1), which appeared to provide an avenue for servant leadership behaviors to emerge. Whether or not servant leadership behaviors were even present in the Society was the first question asked. Several ways of determining this were considered. For example, it was considered that the headquarters' staff of the Society could be questioned on whether they behaved in ways consistent with servant leadership. It was also considered that the regional coordinators and chapter advisors could be questioned as well. The concern with questioning individuals on how they perceived their behaviors centered on how aware these individuals were in understanding how others perceived them differed from how they perceived themselves. It was therefore decided that those in the best position to be affected by the leadership behaviors should be asked. The next question was to determine the best way to get this information. Because this is the first research of this type done specifically with Phi Theta Kappa, a qualitative approach seemed logical. A qualitative study often describes situations, where quantitative studies characterize a situation. The size of Phi Theta Kappa was an issue to consider, so a mixed methodology was chosen. The focus group would facilitate an exploration of how individuals really thought, while a quantitative phase would allow the researcher to obtain information from a larger population. The research questions that were developed are:

1. Are servant leadership behaviors perceived by the student officers within Phi Theta Kappa?
2. Is there a connection between the level of servant leadership behaviors being perceived by the student officers and their level of satisfaction with their position in the organization?
3. Do these perceptions change according to the study demographic variables?

The answer to the first question surrounds servant leadership behaviors. Greenleaf indicated that the concept of servant leadership was developed after his involvement with colleges and universities in the late 1960s and early 1970s, in an attempt to, as he described, as an effort to help these institutions heal (Greenleaf, 2002). He wrote that servant leaders are servants first, that they help followers “become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants” (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 27). This description of servant leadership is consistent with the role of an advisor in Phi Theta Kappa, as advisors are told that chapter officers should be allowed to make mistakes and learn how to resolve them on their own (*Chapter Manual*, 2006).

The answer then, to the first research question, whether servant leadership behaviors are observed by student officers in Phi Theta Kappa, is a resounding yes. The members of the focus group spoke about the need for learning, working as teams and being proactive in their approach to chapter and Society goals. Members openly discussed how they were encouraged to choose the projects that their chapters would be involved in, and how chapter advisors trusted the student officers to get the work required completed, and allowed for the learning experiences to build relationships within the student officer teams. Participants expressed feelings of admiration for advisors in that stories were told of how advisors understood the strengths and potentials of

their chapters' student officers and went beyond encouraging growth, but being personally affected when a student officer failed to achieve their potential. Participants mentioned how advisors will give them a kick when needed, and reach out to the general college community to get the student officer the resources that they need to be successful. The responses to the OLA supported the findings of the focus group. The OLA contains questions directly related to leaders providing growth opportunities throughout the instrument. Question 17 for example, asks if "people within this organization are encouraged by supervisors to share in making important decisions?" Question 20 asks if "people within this organization view conflict as an opportunity to learn and grow?" Question 31 asks if "managers/supervisors and top leadership in this organization create an environment that encourages learning?" and question 42 asks if "managers/supervisors and top leadership in this organization provide opportunities for all workers to develop to their full potential?" These are just a sample of the questions that demonstrate how closely tied the OLA instrument is to the main points of servant leadership. The OLA is scored on a 5-point scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The average score for questions in Section One of the OLA was a 4.18, the average score for questions in Section Two was 4.09, and the average score for questions in Section Three was 4.28. The ranges for all questions fell between 3.65 to a high of 4.56. These scores alone would indicate that participants overall ranked the observance of servant leadership behaviors somewhere between "Agree" and "Strongly Agree."

With the first question being answered, attention is then drawn to the second research question, which considers if the connection between the level of servant leadership behaviors being perceived affects the student officers' level of satisfaction with their position in the organization. The focus group did show a clear tie between how participants viewed their own

role in Phi Theta Kappa, with how they perceived the actions of others. The focus group was the most verbal and enthusiastic when discussing their roles in chapter activities, and not surprising, the rating scores from the OLA were the highest when student officers were reporting on how the student officers viewed their own role. It was interesting to listen to the focus group participants discuss how they chose to be proactive in their chapters; from being enlisted to help chose a chapter advisor, and in choosing the activities that their chapter would be involved in, to even being responsible to finding out who the chapter advisor on their campus was. This point of student officers projecting their own self-perceptions on to others was clearly evident when one participant spoke of being dissatisfied with her college's and advisor's overall lack of initiative regarding Phi Theta Kappa, and latter indicating that the advisors bring out the best in the members, encourage teamwork and show high levels of respect for members. Overall, focus group participants spoke in terms of *I* rather than *they* throughout the discussion.

The results from the OLA survey supported this concept, as the highest scores (4.28 average) were from the third section of the questionnaire and dealt with how the participants viewed their own role in the Society. This indicates that participants thought more of their own involvement than they did for people in general in Phi Theta Kappa (Section One) or of the top leadership (Section Two). Another important consideration for this linkage is in the limited contact student officers have with others outside of their chapters. Members of the focus group indicated that they did not know anyone outside of their chapters and that their first contact with anyone else in the New England Region or in Headquarters' was at the conference that they were currently attending. The limited contact with the regional and headquarter level of Phi Theta Kappa is a part of the overall structure and is one built out of necessity when one considers the size and the purpose of the Society. Programs such as the Hallmark Awards, the Honor Study

Topic and the Civic Engagement projects are all aimed at affecting the local communities where chapters are located. Conferences and conventions are the only face-to-face opportunities local chapters have of interacting with those outside of the local college campus for most students. These issues of projection of self to others, and the structure limiting contact with other levels of the Society does not support servant leadership behaviors being observed in others as affecting how the student officers perceive their own satisfaction in the Society as much as the self-perceptions of the student officers affecting the student officers perception of servant leadership behaviors in others throughout the Society.

The third and final research question asked if perceptions change according to the study variables of college size, the number of student officers within the respondents' chapters, the number of advisors within the respondents' chapters, the activity level of the respondents' chapters and the divisional affiliation of the respondents' chapters. This question was not addressed in the focus group, but was a major concern of the statistical analysis of the OLA results. Of all the demographic variables, the only relationship between the variables was that the size of the college population was related to the number of student officers in the chapter. Given that larger general populations may correspond to larger Phi Theta Kappa chapter membership, this was not surprising. Once the variable were recoded, the only significant correlation between variables was that the star level, which indicated chapter activity levels within Society programs was tied with the number of student officers in the respondents' chapters. This again makes sense that chapters with more officers would have the manpower to be more active than chapters with only one or two officers would have.

The Mann-Whitney tests were particularly helpful in determining if responses on the OLA either supported or failed to support how demographic variables affected responses. No

support was found to indicate that college size affected responses, or that the number of student officers affected responses. Similarly, no support was found to indicate that divisional affiliation affected responses.

Some support through the Mann-Whitney tests was shown to indicate that the number of advisors in the respondents' chapters affected results, and that the activity level of the chapter affected responses. However these results were not conclusive, as support was not shown to be significant at the 0.05 level. Overall, the limited number of responses may be more of a factor than any demographic variable. Considering that less than 20% of the sample frame responded, it must be questioned whether significant results would have been found if the response rate had been greater.

## Conclusions

Phi Theta Kappa is an international honor society that is devoted to the two-year college. It has two purposes, the first is "to recognize and encourage the academic achievement of the two-year college student" ("About Phi Theta Kappa," n.d., ¶ 2), and the second is to "provide opportunities for individual growth and development through participation in honors, leadership, service and fellowship programming" ("About Phi Theta Kappa," n.d., ¶2). Greenleaf's concept of servant leadership can be found throughout the Society, whether one examines how chapter advisors are volunteers, who often dedicate their time and money to participate in activities, most without any type of compensation from their colleges, or in the Society's development of a Leadership Development Studies program. The Chapter Resource Manual also includes servant leadership concepts as it highlights the need to allow student officers to explore and learn from their own experiences in leadership roles (*Chapter Manual*, 2006). It is evident from exploring

the nature of Phi Theta Kappa that servant leadership is the common thread throughout the Society. It would be logical to believe that the Society would encourage servant leadership behaviors in all who are associated with the Society.

Part of the nature of Phi Theta Kappa is ingrained in its association with community colleges, as this is where most Phi Theta Kappa chapters are chartered. Phi Theta Kappa and community colleges share the goal of developing individuals to become the future employees of the contemporary workplace, as well as the future members and hopefully leaders of society in general. With the primary interface between the Society and the student being the chapter advisor, who is most likely volunteering their talents to the Society; the need to determine if leadership behaviors are related to the concepts of servant leadership or not is important. This study attempted to do just that. Not only did this research aim to determine if servant leadership behaviors were present, it did so by asking those affected most by those leadership behaviors—the student officers themselves.

Overall, it was confirmed that servant leadership behaviors are being observed within the Society. The focus group, which consisted of a small sample of student officers in the New England region (Division I), and the survey, which consisted of a small sample of student officers in all other regions, confirmed that the Society acts in manners that they emphasize throughout Society literature and programs. Perhaps what is the most interesting conclusion of this study is however, that there is a strong possibility that student officers rate the Society as having servant leadership behaviors because the student officers themselves have high self-perceptions of their own behaviors. This might very well be summed up by the focus group participant who indicated that students join the organization because their perceptions of themselves align with the goals and purpose of Phi Theta Kappa. Student officers were not

familiar with others outside of their own chapters, so their discussions would seem to be limited to their own chapters, regardless of their responses to how the organization as a whole or how top management behaved.

When this study was first started, one major limitation that was explored was that this was an exploratory work with a case study approach. It was thought any results could only be generalized to the larger population of Phi Theta Kappa. Results could not be generalized to other populations, even if another similar honor society were analyzed. It was also realized that since student officers change every year, results could not be generalized for any other time period other than the one identified here. It was not however predicted that response rates would be as low as they were. With only 5 student officers participating in the focus group, and only 52 responses being received from the sample frame of 272 members, results cannot be generalized to the current population of Phi Theta Kappa either. Had a larger number of student officers responded to the survey, for example, additional statistical analyses could have been run, and results might have been clearer or even different. At this point, the results of this study, which do support that servant leadership behaviors are being displayed, can only be interpreted as being the current reality for those who chose to participate. Even with this limited study, the results are noteworthy. At this point in time, for the student officers who chose to participate in either the focus group or the OLA survey, Phi Theta Kappa is living up to its objective of providing growth opportunities for its members.

### Recommendations

Clearly, there is a need for further study. Phi Theta Kappa is but one organization of its type, yet even if that were not the case, this study suffered from a limited response rate.

Duplicating this study and taking additional efforts to gain participation should be done. If possible, focus groups should be undertaken in other regions, and doing these groups over a period of time would yield new and interesting information. The focus group for this study was done early in the academic year, when student officers were fairly new to their leadership roles. Repeating this at the end of the academic year, perhaps at the Regional Spring Conventions would indicate changes in perceptions, which might reflect a pre-and post-term comparison. It would be interesting to see if perceptions changed as student officers worked with their advisors and had opportunities to connect with Headquarter staff.

Repeating the survey phase with stronger efforts at participation should be done as well. It was not predicted that participation rates would be as low as they were. It is questioned if e-mailed surveys were viewed as spam by service providers and were never received by the intended individuals. It is suggested that involvement by the Executive Director be obtained earlier in encouraging student officers to participate. Rather than the Executive Director writing advisors after the first two e-mail requests were sent, a note to the student officers themselves prior to a study being started might help response rates. Further advertising of a study in other Society publications and mass e-mails may help to boost knowledge of the purpose and ensure student officers that the study is indeed sanctioned by the Society would help response rates.

Additionally, repeating this study would provide a longitudinal approach that would allow the Society to understand how leadership behaviors are viewed from year-to-year. The transient nature of membership only allows a limited amount of time for a student officer to be active in the Society. Incorporating a similar study throughout the alumni associations may provide an additional perspective as well.

The importance of this study cannot be undermined however, even with the limitations that it faced. The OLA has been used in other work, but no other work used it to examine a college honor society. This fact makes this study unique and worthy of consideration as servant leadership continues to be assessed throughout other organizations, whether these other organizations are employers, charity organizations, religious institutions, or colleges.

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APPENDIX  
Phi Theta Kappa Executive Director's E-mail Asking Advisors for Their Help in Requesting  
Participation

-----Original Message-----

From: <name removed>

Sent: Tuesday, January 09, 2007 11:51 AM

To: <name removed>

Subject: FW: Requesting your help on my dissertation

Dear Phi Theta Kappa Advisors,

We are presently working with Susan Merideth, advisor, Alpha Nu Upsilon, Hesser College, New Hampshire on a research project studying whether Phi Theta Kappa chapter officers perceive servant-leadership behavior when engaging in Phi Theta Kappa programs.

For the purposes of the study only, a survey was sent via email to a sampling of chapter officers (excluding those residing in the New England Region). Additionally, a hard copy survey will be mailed (give date) to this population. We would appreciate your encouraging chapter officers complete and return to the survey to Susan Merideth should they receive it.

Thank you.

<Name removed>