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## Purposeful Investment in Others: The Power of a Character of Service

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Purposeful Investment in Others: The Power of a Character of Service

Kayla Michelle Logan

A dissertation submitted in fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Industrial-Organizational Psychology

Seattle Pacific University

School of Psychology, Family, & Community

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to my family:

My dear siblings, Kourtney, Christina, and Kyle, who offer a special dynamic of kindness, love, laughter, and camaraderie in life;

My mom, Deborah, who is the biggest advocate and champion of my aspirations;  
And my dad, Brent, who continues to teach me that loving your family, working hard, and caring for those you serve are life's greatest joys and responsibilities.

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### **Abstract**

Organizations that are intentional about investing in their employees' development tend to experience an increased positive relationship between leaders and employees, which can help in preventing employee burnout, increase employee satisfaction, support employee learning, increase retention, and overall productivity (Baruch-Feldman, Brondolo, Ben-Dayana, & Schwartz, 2002; Luthans, 2002; Macik-frey, Quick, & Cooper, 2009, Luthans & Avolio, 2003). However, due to cost, time, and scheduling, organizations are often required to make difficult decisions regarding who receives these critical investments (Crane & Hartwell, 2018; Grove & Furnham, 2016, Sherman & Freas, 2004). Some research supports using leaders to invest in employee development (Bucic, Robinson, & Ramburuth, 2010; Jiang, Jackson, & Colakoglu, 2016; Hagen & Gavrilova Aguilar, 2012). The purpose of the current study was to examine the extent to which a leader's character, focused on being of service to others, impacts the relationship between fulfillment of purpose and a leader's satisfaction with their investment in others. The sample for the current study included 215 self-identified leaders who were primarily Caucasian (73.9%), equally dispersed by gender, and had an average age of 38. A moderated multiple regression in Hayes (2013) PROCESS macro was used to test the conditional indirect effect of fulfillment of purpose and satisfaction with investment in others, moderated by a leader's character of service. The model yielded non-significant results ( $r = .18$ ,  $R^2 = .03$ ,  $F(3, 211) = 2.35$ ,  $p = .073$ ). Findings from this study indicate that additional research is needed to understand how a character

of service may be leveraged to support the connection between fulfillment of purpose and investment in others.

*Keywords:* purpose, development, investment in others, character

## CHAPTER I

### Introduction and Literature Review

*“A synergy of motivation, self-knowledge, values, and leadership suggests a leader’s actions can inspire others to dream, learn, do, and become more.” – Luttrell (2011)*

With each passing year, the complexity of the workplace and workforce exponentially increases (Crane & Hartwell, 2018), creating ongoing opportunities for organizations to analyze how they develop their current and future workforce. This creates a demand for organizations to identify methods of developing employees through naturally regenerating resources or personal and interpersonal shifts. When an organization finds and invests in scalable, effective developmental opportunities within the workplace, the organization tends to experience increased levels of job performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, job satisfaction, happiness in the workplace, retention, and engagement, with decreased levels of employee stress, turnover, and absenteeism (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Taylor & Curtis, 2018, Huselid, 1995). One consistent method of developing employees has been to utilize leaders within an organization to invest their time and expertise for the growth of their employees. This method of development leverages leader-member interactive relationships to create investments in employee growth at all levels (Hagen & Aguilar, 2012). When utilizing this leader-member process, what do organizations need to know about their leaders in order to ensure that leaders will make a satisfying investment in developing members of their organization?

The purpose of this study was to investigate the extent to which a leader’s fulfillment of their own purpose impacts their satisfaction with their investment in others.

There are at least two levels in our understanding of fulfillment of purpose. The first level is to understand a person's purpose. The desire for a sense of purpose is something we share as humans, however, not all of us have had the opportunity to define that purpose in detail. Once the first level is defined, the next level is the exploration of the extent to which we have fulfilled our articulated purpose. Furthermore, to make the connection between purpose and investment in others, having an individual identify who they are investing in and their satisfaction with those investments would help us to understand the relationship between a leader's articulated sense of purpose and their investment in others. In addition to the relationship between fulfillment of purpose and providing a satisfying investment in others, I am also seeking to understand if the relationship between fulfillment of purpose and investment in others differs depending on a person's character of service, which is a specific set of characteristics that promote serving, developing, and supporting others. In the next section, I will expand upon the key focus areas of this study.

### **Investment in Others**

Investment in others is an intentional focus on the growth and development of another person. Ultimately, there are three major components of investing in others, including social integration, relational content, and social networks (House, Umberson, & Landis, 1988). Social integration speaks to the type and frequency of interaction with sources of support, with satisfaction with these sources stemming from the frequency of connection and the need for support (House et al., 1988). Relational content includes the quality of the relationship between two individuals, whether it is a positive or negative relationship. House et al. (1988) found that the quality is equally as important as the

frequency of meeting and role-combination (e.g., peer-to-peer versus supervisor to direct report). Positive relationships foster investments that buffer stress and burnout, and support individual development. Conversely, relationships that are negative in nature result in stressors or unwanted demands on an individual. People in negative relationships attempt to regulate interactions based on the positive or negative nature of the relationship, with the goal of increasing feelings of support (House et al., 1988). Social networking is defined as the active development of diverse connections across multiple groups. Investing in others differs from networking in that a network is a set of relationships that surround a person for the purpose of gain for either the interviewer or interviewee, such that one or both parties are seeking connections (Ibarra, 1993). The primary focus of social networking is to build connections that will offer new opportunities (Wolff & Moser, 2009; Walker, 2001). Members of someone's network could make an active investment in the individual, however a single leader's investment would only make up one facet of an individual's network.

For the purposes of this study, I focus on investing in others as the act of pouring one's personal resources and energy into another individual for the sake of that individual's personal growth and development. This is measured by the leader's satisfaction with their personal investment in another's development as opposed to an outside indicator of effectiveness of investment or the receiver's satisfaction with the leader's investment. As noted above, the leader's satisfaction with investment in others could be determined by a wide array of components such as the frequency of interaction between the leader and those they invest in, or a product of seeing someone actively develop.

### **Purpose**

An individual who identifies a sense of purpose is more likely to develop effective coping skills (Edwards & Holden, 2001; Stevens, Pfof, Wessels, 1987), experience increased life satisfaction (Peterson, Park, & Seligman, 2005), greater levels of happiness (Bronk, 2014; French & Joseph, 1999), hope (Bronk, Hill, Lapsley, Talb, & Finch, 2009) and develop a strong self-efficacy (Dewitz, Woolsey, & Walsh, 2009). Conversely, failing to identify a sense of purpose has been found to result in anxiety (Bigler, Neimeyer, & Jess, 2001), stress (Steger & Frazier, 2005), feelings of depression (Mascaro & Rosen, 2005), and even suicidal thoughts and behaviors (Bonner & Rich, 1987; Kinnier et al., 1994). Supporting an individual to focus on identifying a sense of purpose allows for self-development, in an effort to prepare for a future that serves others (Arnett, 2007). Over the years, purpose has taken on several meanings and definitions. Steger, Frazier, Oishi, and Kaler (2006) stated purpose as having meaning in one's life, such that one's existence goes beyond their individual self. Similarly, researchers Damon, Menon, and Bronk (2003) wrote that purpose manifests as a stable, overarching goal to achieve. Purpose stimulates goals, manages behaviors, and provides a sense of meaning in one's life, by engaging or utilizing an individual's personal, finite resources and is central to an individual's identity (McKnight & Kashdan, 2009). Empirical and popular literature continue to focus on the topic of purpose because of the numerous positive outcomes associated with it.

***Fulfillment of purpose.*** Aristotle (Nichomachean Ethics [NE], trans. 1999) claimed that it is not only the pursuit of defining one's purpose, but the actualization or fulfillment of that purpose, that is required for human development and flourishing.

Behrani and Jadeja (2016) define fulfillment as achieving a goal for which one is hopeful. With this in mind, I will define three potential ways that an individual can actively fulfill their purpose throughout their daily lives, including (a) completing actions and behaviors that support their self-defined purpose, (b) recalling their overall life satisfaction, and (c) the participant experiencing meaning in life.

***Fulfillment of purpose as behaviors.*** Fulfillment of purpose may be reached by actively demonstrating actions and behaviors that move an individual closer to their desired objective, or in this instance, their purpose (Ajzen, 1991; Elangovan, Pinder, & McLean, 2010). These proactive behaviors could be small in nature, such as cooking dinner or going to work each day to financially provide for a family. Conversely, it could be a large action that affects a person's everyday life such as moving across the country for a new role or taking care of an aging parent. These actions could take place across a lifelong journey or last a few years (Ajzen, 1991; Esposito et al., 2016; Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012).

***Fulfillment of purpose as life satisfaction.*** An individual may articulate their level of fulfillment through their evaluation of life satisfaction (Hagmaier & Abele, 2015). Hoppock (1935) noted the nature of life satisfaction is a complicated one, in that “there may be no such thing as contextual satisfaction independent of the other satisfactions in one's life. Family relationships, health, relative social status in the community, and a multitude of other factors may be just as important as a job itself in determining what we tentatively choose to call contextualized job satisfaction.” An individual may strive for a sense of purpose, value, and self in order to obtain congruence across his or her life (LaGuardia, 2009; Deci & Ryan, 2008). With this in mind,



individuals who are higher on life satisfaction may also experience greater levels of fulfillment of their purpose.

*Fulfillment of purpose as meaning in life.* In addition to actions and measurement of an outcome such as life satisfaction, fulfillment of purpose could be achieved by the expression or experience of meaning. Meaning in life, or how a person perceives the impact of the work they do, can fluctuate (Duffy, Bott, Allan, Torrey, & Dik, 2012; Hirschi & Herrmann, 2013). Barley and Kunda (2001) define work as energy exuded purposefully to produce an outcome, product, service, or other output. If the work someone completes ties back into their purpose or sense of meaning, this encourages fulfillment of their purpose. If that work does not foster meaning for the individual, it may no longer contribute to fulfillment to their overarching purpose.

Understanding how an individual conceptualizes fulfillment provides us a way to gauge the extent to which they have fulfilled their defined purpose. As discussed above, fulfillment may be apparent in the way an individual behaves or the actions they consistently demonstrate. It could also present itself in their overall life satisfaction or the extent to which their life reflects meaning. Defining one's purpose and active fulfillment of that purpose is important as it allows an individual to cope with the world around them, have lower levels of anxiety, and experience higher levels of self-efficacy (Judge & Bono, 2001). However, identifying the extent to which an individual has defined and fulfilled their purpose may not be enough to predict the level of investment they will direct towards others in their life. In other words, fulfillment of one's purpose may be a necessary, but insufficient prerequisite to making a satisfying investment in others. A leader may have both defined and fulfilled their purpose across multiple areas of their

life. This, however, does not mean they will automatically invest in those around them. In the next section, I propose a construct that could be the defining difference between those that do invest their time and energy in the development of others, compared to those who do not.

### **The Impact of a Character of Service on a Leader's Investment in Others**

It makes intuitive sense that there would be a relationship between those who have defined and are fulfilling their purpose and their willingness to invest time, energy, and skills in another person. With that in mind, there are still people across organizations that have fulfilled their purpose, yet do not invest in those around them. In this next section, I propose that a character of service is the moderating factor between those that do and do not make meaningful investments in those that surround them.

**Character of Service defined.** Character is a set of behaviors based on self-concepts and views of affiliations with others (McKenna & Yost, 2004; McKenna & Campbell, 2011). These behavior characteristics begin to emerge as a consolidation of beliefs about oneself following the completion of childhood and solidify in middle adulthood (Horowitz, 2002; Erikson, 1982; Colarusso & Nemiroff, 1981). Below are a few concepts required to courageously serve others including self-efficacy, self-esteem, transformational leadership characteristics, and servant leadership characteristics.

**Theoretical perspectives of character of service.** Several theories in the leadership literature examine parallel constructs to character of service; however, there is limited research specifically examining a character of service. Three theories that examine similar constructs focus primarily on the variables of self-efficacy, self-esteem,

and agency. In order to understand the empirical background on a character of service, these three theories will be examined in the context of the current study.

***Self-efficacy.*** A character of service requires self-efficacy. Bandura (1994) defined self-efficacy as a person's belief about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy is built through experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological feedback. Once built, self-efficacy impacts an individual's performance and behaviors. It determines how people are motivated internally and subsequently behave; it is an internal estimate of one's ability to cope, perform, and succeed (Judge & Bono, 2001). An individual that shows high self-efficacy or believes strongly in their capabilities will approach new or obscure tasks and challenges or opportunities to master new skills. Conversely, someone who does not have high self-efficacy may treat new challenges as threats or scenarios to avoid. One's self-efficacy affects the goals an individual pursues, in addition to the obstacles he or she will willingly attempt.

***Self-Esteem.*** Another characteristic of someone with a character of service is someone who has self-esteem, defined as an overall value that one places on themselves as a person (Judge & Bono, 2001), an individual's overall self-evaluation (Rosenberg, 1965; Adekiya et al., 2019), or a perceived, internal evaluation of one's accomplishments, values, capabilities, and possessions (Hajloo, 2014). Those with high self-esteem will view challenges throughout life as a deserved opportunity to master and gain new skills, which can be used going forward. Conversely, a person with low self-esteem would view challenges as underserved opportunities or even an opportunity to fail (Locke, McClear, & Knight, 1996). Those with high self-esteem exert optimism in the

face of opportunities, affecting future success and overall satisfaction (Dodgson & Wood, 1998). Self-esteem refers to the overall evaluation of one's accomplishments, capabilities, values and possessions, while self-efficacy on the other hand is the perceived competence of accomplishing a particular task (Hajloo, 2014). Both constructs, self-efficacy and self-esteem, each in their own way, support a character of service through the belief that one has the ability to effectively and positively impact the development of others.

*Agency.* In addition to self-efficacy and self-esteem, serving others requires agency, or the notion that your actions can make a difference in the world around you (Riley, 2019; Giddens, 1984). Agency is about taking action on one's purpose and utilizing knowledge and competence to impact the world around them. Richardson (2015) introduced a notion of 'agentic action', which was defined as an individual taking purposeful action. It is a method of how individuals construct certain aspects of their life in an impactful manner.

Each of these concepts are required in the reality of a character of service, meaning an individual must have the belief that they are capable of successfully overcoming obstacles or challenging tasks, they must have a high level of value placed on themselves, and they must believe the notion that actions they take can impact the external world around them. In addition to these concepts, an individual who has a character of service will take action for the betterment of others as a leader. Individuals need self-efficacy, self-esteem, and agency to know that they are able to support and invest in others and beyond that, they must evoke behaviors specifically meant to serve

those around them. The below leadership behaviors spark the best in people and fuel the development of others' personal journeys (Greenleaf, 1977).

***Transformational leadership.*** Transformational leadership has been associated with catalyzing the development of followers (Avolio et al., 2004; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990; Crane & Hartwell, 2008). These findings support the powerful impact that transformational leadership has on followers. It is a set of leadership behaviors that can be enacted to support, motivate, and challenge employees, thus empowering those around them to develop in a low cost and scalable manner (Howell & Avolio, 1993; Kark & Shamir, 2013). Transformational leaders are individuals who create an inspiring vision for those they lead, and provide support to their followers, which enables them to develop into leaders themselves (Avolio, 2011; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Bass (1985) proposed that transformational leaders exhibit four primary factors: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Some scholars argue that the four factors of transformational leadership relate to employee development (Bucic, Robinson, & Ramburuth, 2010; Jiang, Jackson, & Colakoglu, 2016) because it encourages the airing of problems, creativity, and innovation while treating each employee as having different developmental needs (Bass, 2000; Vera & Crossan, 2004). That vision allows followers to identify with the leader and encourages them to challenge assumptions and innovate (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

***Servant leadership.*** Servant leadership builds upon the four principles of transformational leadership by specifically identifying serving and caring for others (Lumpkin & Achen, 2018). There are six primary dimensions of servant leadership

including: empowering and developing people, showing humility, leading authentically, accepting people for who they are, providing direction, and acting as stewards who work for the benefit of the whole (Laub, 1999; van Dierendonck, 2011). Servant leaders prioritize the learning and development of others over financial or personal outcomes (Frick, 2004). It requires self-knowledge, which makes fulfillment of one's basic needs essential for being a servant leader (van Dierendonck & Herren, 2006). Servant leadership speaks to the factors that motivate an individual in order to predict external responses. It ensures that the leader focuses on those that they serve and encourages their follower's self-worth (van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). Holistically, Luthans & Avolio (2003) explained that the servant-leader is governed by creating opportunities to help followers grow, which is the basis of a character of service.

A character of service requires a combination of characteristics in a leader. For the purposes of the current study, the construct character of service identifies leaders that are actively serving others and learning or improving themselves for the sake of others. This builds upon the theoretical framework outlined above, such that in addition to the characteristics of self-efficacy, self-esteem, and agency, leaders with a character of service must also identify as actively taking steps to serve others and have a desire to transform themselves as a service to their followers. Without leaders believing they are capable of impacting others, a leader will lack the ability to make a satisfying investment in their followers. Additionally, without the desire to serve and develop themselves for the sake of others, a leader will fall short of having a character of service.

## **The Present Study: Purposeful Investment in Others: The Power of a Character of Service**

In the current study, I propose that the relationship between fulfillment of purpose and investment in others is moderated by a character of service to others. More specifically I propose that an individual who has defined and taken actionable steps towards the fulfillment of their purpose is more likely to invest in others than an individual who has not. The findings of this study will aid in understanding how organizations can utilize purpose-driven managers as catalysts to scale developmental opportunities across all levels, business units, and divisions of their organization in an effective, economical way.

### **Hypotheses**

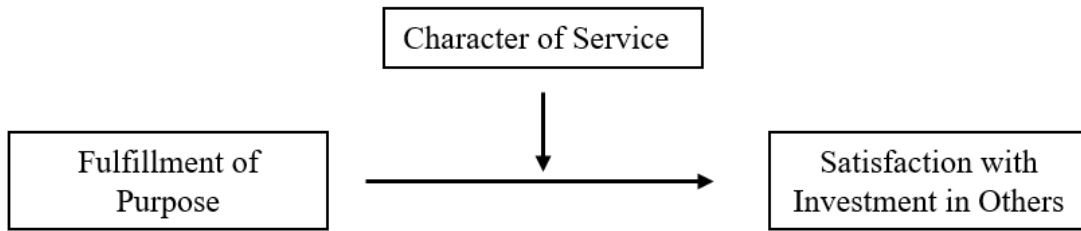
Given the literature discussed above, the hypotheses for the proposed study were as follows:

#### ***Hypothesis 1***

The relationship between a character of service and a satisfying investment in others is positively related.

#### ***Hypothesis 2***

The relationship between fulfillment of purpose and investment in others is synergistically moderated by an individual's character of service, such that the relationship between fulfillment of purpose and investment in others will be strengthened for individuals who identify as having a character of service.



*Figure 1.* Full Proposed Model. This figure depicts the hypothesized relationship between the moderator and the independent and dependent variables.



## CHAPTER II

### Method

#### **Sampling Procedure**

In the current study, I used archival data from an online leadership development tool to test hypotheses. Participants were recruited through an online leadership development process utilized by their organization. These users were sent an email invitation to develop an online profile, consisting of various demographic and personality questions. Upon logging in, participants were given the option to submit their data for research purposes. Only those who selected to submit their data for research were included in this study. This sampling methodology allows a sample of leaders from a variety of leadership roles and organizations to participate with little interruption of their work roles and life. While this sampling methodology does introduce a limitation (i.e., self-selection bias), this approach was chosen to ensure minimal interruption of participants' work roles and life. Additionally, because the nature of the tool is for developmental purposes rather than evaluative reasons, we anticipated more accurate and honest responses because participants were not being evaluated by the assessments. The procedure and data collection were conducted in compliance with human research subject rights and obtained Institutional Review Board approval.

#### **Participant Demographics and Sample Size**

Participants included in this study were individuals over the age of 18 and eligible for participation because of their formal roles as business leaders, church leaders, or emerging leaders. These participants completed the Developmental Readiness Index (DRI; McKenna, 2010), Calling and Purpose Inventory (CAPI, McKenna, 2010) and

People Investment Plan (PIP; McKenna, 2010) as part of a personal leadership development process. Participants include clergy members, business/organizational leaders, volunteer leaders, informal leaders, student leaders, and unidentified leaders. They were recruited for personal/professional leadership development, from a variety of industries that included education, businesses, and not-for-profit organizations. Of the 1,033 individuals in the online leadership development system, a total of 215 participants met the inclusion criteria. Participants who failed to complete all items or provide a definition of purpose were eliminated. In accordance with Aguinis (1995), the minimum number of participants needed is 120, therefore the sample size suggestion was met in order to gain sufficient power. Participants in the final sample included individuals between the age of 20 to 71 years old ( $M = 38$ ). There was nearly equal representation of females and males (40 and 54.9%, respectively), and the sample was predominantly Caucasian (73.9%) and Catholic (66.3%). These leaders' organizational settings were dispersed across For-Profit Business (26.5%), Educational Institution (19.1%), Healthcare (14.9%), and Non-Profit (12.6%).

### **Measures and Variables**

*Fulfillment of Purpose.* For this study, participants were asked to define purpose for themselves and therefore responses were based upon individual perceptions of purpose in life. This study utilizes a contextualized measurement of fulfillment of purpose, wherein participants were first asked a qualitative question, "*If you believe you have a purpose in life, what is that purpose?*" Sample responses are in Table 1 below. Following the open textbox, participants were then asked to rate the extent to which they felt they were fulfilling that self-identified purpose: "*To what extent are you fulfilling*

*your purpose in life?*” with a 10-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 10 (to a great extent). Because of the current’s study’s focus on defining and identifying the extent to which purpose is fulfilled, all participants must have defined their purpose to be included in the study. All qualitative responses were reviewed to ensure the participant provided a definition of their purpose. Quantitative responses were removed from the data when a qualitative response was blank, unrelated to defining the participant’s purpose, or if the response indicated the participant was unsure of their purpose.

Although multiple-item measures are preferred from a psychometric standpoint, a single-item measure can be utilized to understand a specific aspect of a construct with minimized respondent burden, reduction of criterion contamination, and increase content and criterion validity of the assessment (Cheung, & Lucas, 2014; Duffy & Sedlecek, 2010; Fisher, Matthews, & Gibbons, 2016; Postmes, Haslam, & Jans, 2013).

Additionally, this study means to capture a holistic view of the participant’s definition of purpose and the fulfillment of that purpose. A single item allowed us to measure a higher order variable as compared to segmented definitions and measurements of fulfillment of purpose.

Table 1.  
*Example Qualitative Responses: Definitions of Purpose*

Qualitative Response Examples	Fulfillment of Purpose Score
<i>I believe everyone has a purpose in life, and mine is to help improve the lives of others by helping them better understand themselves + their potential and supporting them to reach that potential.</i>	0
<i>My purpose is to become a warm-hearted, well rounded, leader/influencer in the corporate world that drives change in a healthy and efficient way.</i>	3
<i>To share Christ with those in my community by investing in youth and advocating for the marginalized</i>	3
<i>I have felt from the time I was a young adult (age 20-21) that my calling and purpose is to raise a family with more safety, intention, and purpose than the one I was raised in. This initial calling has developed into me desiring to nurture and equip those God brings across my path, including friends and co-workers.</i>	8
<i>Invest in and develop people. Run an effective organization in which participants/staff grow/thrive/reach their potential. 1. Follow Jesus 2. Be transformed by Jesus. 3. Influence others for Jesus.</i>	9
<i>My purpose in life is to help those who want to be helped. Is to break the family tradition of always struggling for money and make them realize that the world is different and we don't all have to follow that same cycle</i>	9

**Character of Service.** Participants completed the initial Developmental Readiness Index (DRI), which includes demographic items and personality items. Within the DRI, there is a Character of Service measure included within a larger character scale. The Character of Service scale consisted of 3-items focused on a participant’s character related to serving others. A Generalized Partial Credit Model (GPCM), based on a 2-parameter logistics Item Response Theory (IRT), was run on the scale to identify the probability of detecting the respondents correct score of the latent variable based on difficulty and discrimination. The GPCM IRT analysis was used, as the model indices for GPCM have a low misidentification rate when used on data sets that contain less than 500 samples (Kang, et al., 2009). The IRT analysis identified one item, “*You are a better version of yourself for the sake of others,*” that was ineffective at capturing the latent

variable, Character of Service, and the item was subsequently removed from the scale. A GPCM IRT analysis identifies which combination of items best work together to capture a latent variable. Removing one item indicates that with the item in the scale, it is less effective at capturing the latent variable. This may be due to another item in the scale capturing what the item is measuring, thus creating unnecessary variance in predicting the latent variable than without the item. For example, the two items remaining in the scale are, *“You are serving others around you who are in need of something that you are in a position to provide.”* and *“You are called to serve others with a character and calling to learn and improve for the sake of others.”* The second of the two remaining items include the concept of improving for the sake of others, therefore the item that was removed, *“You are a better version of yourself for the sake of others.”* may have failed to add additional support in measuring the latent variable. Responses are scored on a 10-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not at all) to 10 (To a Great Extent). Once complete, participants received an email granting them access to the Calling and Purpose Inventory (CAPI) and People Investment Plan (PIP) to complete.

***Satisfaction in Investment in Others.*** The dependent variable is a measurement of the participant’s satisfaction with their investment in another person. The participant is asked identifying questions about the person they are investing in, such as, *“How would this person identify you?”* followed by, *“On a scale from 1 (Not at all satisfied) to 10 (Very satisfied), how satisfied are you with how you are currently investing in this person? This might include how you communicate with them or how often, or other things that impact your satisfaction.”* This item measures a leaders’ identification of an individual they define as someone they should be investing in. Additionally, this item is a

measurement of that leaders' satisfaction with their investment in the identified person, rather than a measurement of the effectiveness of their investment based on key performance metrics or a 360 review of the investee's perception of satisfaction with the leader's investment.

### **Research Design & Procedure**

Data for the current study was collected in three phases across a 4-year time period through individual and team utilization of the online leadership development tool. Participants met with certified leadership coaches who led developmental conversations on the assessments.

*Statistical Analyses.* A moderated multiple regression analysis of character of service on the relationship between fulfillment of purpose and investment with others was used to analyze interaction effects (Hayes, 2013). I hypothesized a synergistic moderation in that the relationship between fulfillment of purpose and investment in others would be strengthened for individuals who identify as having a character of service. I prepared my data by checking for outliers and missingness (Orr, 1991; Olinsky et al., 2003). Prior to running my analysis, I checked my assumptions such as homogeneity of variance, normal distribution, and linearity (Field, 2013).

### CHAPTER III

#### Results

##### **Preliminary Analyses and Assumptions Testing**

Before hypothesis testing was conducted, the complete dataset was cleaned and descriptive statistics were run. The focus of these preliminary analyses was to examine and identify any abnormalities in the data that could increase the likelihood of committing a type I or type II error. Type I or type II error could have undermined the ability to detect a true effect in the sample. The following sections explain the steps taken in the preliminary analyses.

**Data Cleaning and Preparation.** Of the 1,033 individuals in the online leadership development system, a total of 215 participants met the inclusion criteria. Participants who failed to complete all items or provide a definition of purpose were eliminated. In accordance with Aguinis (1995), the minimum number of participants needed is 120, therefore the same size suggestion was met in order to gain sufficient power.

**Normality.** Various methods were utilized to examine data normality. Histograms were created to examine skew and kurtosis in the data. Results indicate a negatively skewed distribution for the variables of character of service and satisfaction in investment in others. In addition to visually scanning the histograms, the Shapiro-Wilks test also indicated each variable had distributions significantly different from a normal distribution. This indicates that a greater number of participants scored higher on all variables than those that scored lower, indicating a negative skew. Although the distributions were statistically significantly different from a normal distribution, data was

not transformed. This decision was made as it was determined that the difficulty in interpreting transformed data was a greater risk than overlooking a small, but significant, skew. This concern will be addressed as a limitation and discussed in detail in the discussion section.

Scatter plots between each predictor and the outcome variable were checked to assess and support a linear relationship. Furthermore, residuals were evaluated via scatter and P-P plots to check for homoscedasticity, indicating residual variances were evenly dispersed across variables.

Table 2.  
*Means, Standard Deviations, Internal Consistencies, and Correlations*

Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
Gender	1.35	.575	-			
Age	38.33	13.31	-.281**	-		
Fulfillment of Purpose (IV)	7.06	1.65	-.021	.198**	-	
Character of Service (Moderator)	8.02	1.61	-.08	.308**	.366**	-
Sat. with Investment (DV)	6.79	1.99	.027	.047	.076	.176**

*Note.*  $N = 215$ . Sex is measured 1 = Male and 2 = Female. \*\*  $p < .01$  level (2-tailed).

**Descriptives and correlations.** Descriptive statistics and correlations were conducted for all predictor and criterion variables in the current study. Results are shown in Table 2. A few relationships are worth noting in Table 1, including significant negative relationships between gender and age and significant positive relationships between age and fulfillment of purpose and character of service. This highlights the potential connection age has to these variables. Additionally, fulfillment of purpose had a significant positive correlation with character of service and character of service shared a significant positive correlation with satisfaction with investment in others. This will be further examined in the subsequent analyses and discussion.



### Primary Analyses

**Hypotheses 1.** In Hypothesis 1, it was predicted that an individual's character of service would be positively related to a leader's satisfaction with their investment in others. To analyze this, a simple regression was conducted using SPSS. The results suggest that my first hypothesis was supported such that the relationship between character of service and satisfaction with investment in others was significant and positive,  $r = .176$ ,  $p = .010$ ,  $R^2 = .031$  (see Table 3).

Table 3.

*Regression Results for (Moderator) Character of Service → (DV) Satisfaction with Investment in Others*

<i>Predictor</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	5.05	.681	7.411	.000
Character of Service	.217	.083	2.610	.010

**Hypothesis 2.** To test the hypothesis that the relationship between fulfillment of purpose and satisfaction in investment in others is moderated by an individual's character of service, such that the relationship between fulfillment of purpose and satisfaction with investment in others will be strengthened for individuals with a higher level character of service, in comparison with those with lower levels of character of service, SPSS Macro, PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) was used, which provides bootstrapped estimates of the conditional indirect effect based on 1,000 resamples. A significant moderation was not found,  $b = 3.78$ , 95% CI [-.93, .8.49],  $t = 1.58$ ,  $p = .1149$ . As a follow up to further examine the interaction, simple slopes were plotted to evaluate the nature of the relationship, visually demonstrating that there was no significant effect on the relationship between fulfillment of purpose and satisfaction in investment in others

moderated by a character of service. Specifically, the relationship between fulfillment of purpose and satisfaction with investment in others remained non-significant, regardless of the level of one’s character of service. The overall model was non-significant,  $r = .18$ ,  $R^2 = .03$ ,  $F(3, 211) = 2.35$ ,  $p = .073$  (see Table 4). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was not supported. The non-significant interaction is depicted in Figure 2.

Table 4.  
*Regression Results for Conditional Indirect Effect: Fulfillment of Purpose on Satisfaction with Investment. Moderator: Character of Service*

Predictor	B	SE	t	p
Constant	3.78	2.38	1.58	.1149
Fulfillment of Purpose	.20	.36	.56	.58
Character of Service	.36	.30	1.20	.23
Purpose x Service	-.02	.04	-.53	.59

Note.  $R^2 = .03$

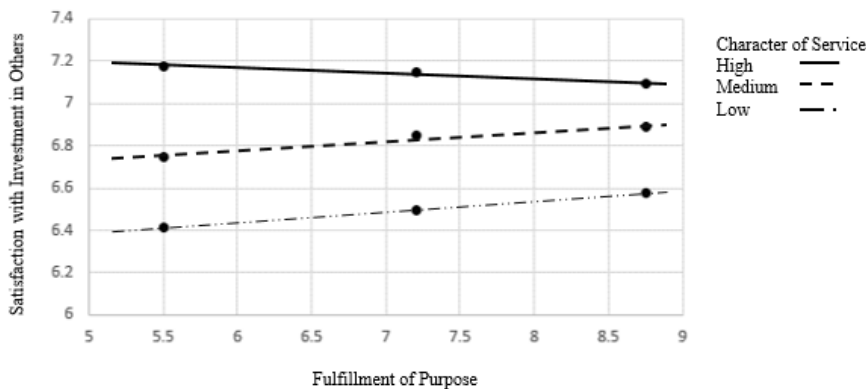


Figure 2. Interaction of fulfillment of purpose and character of service on satisfaction in investment in others.

**Exploratory Analysis**

The significant correlation existing between character of service and satisfaction with investment in others combined with a non-significant moderated multiple regression, indicates a relationship between the variables may be present, however not as

originally hypothesized as a strengthening variable, but rather as a mediating variable. A mediating variable explains the relationship between the independent variable, fulfillment of purpose, and dependent variable, satisfaction with investment in others. An exploratory analysis was run to determine if fulfillment of purpose would be positively related to a leader's satisfaction with investment in others through the mediating variable of character of service, such that individuals who score higher on character of service will score higher on satisfaction with investment in others. Results from the exploratory analysis were nonsignificant, such that character of service did not mediate the relationship between fulfillment of purpose and satisfaction with investment in others. Results from the outcome model in Table 5 indicate that character of service was not significantly related to a leader's satisfaction with investment in others ( $B = 0.211$ ,  $p = .02$ ). Additionally, the direct effect of fulfillment of purpose on satisfaction with investment in others was nonsignificant ( $B = .0917$ ,  $p = .266$ ), indicating that fulfillment of purpose and satisfaction with investment in others are not significantly related. These findings will be further examined in the discussion section.

Table 5. Regression Results for Exploratory Mediation Analysis

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	Confidence Intervals	
<i>Mediator Model</i> (DV = Character of Service)						
Constant	5.499	.451	12.191	.000	Lower 4.610	Upper 6.389
Fulfillment of Purpose	.357	.062	5.735	.000	.234	.480
<i>Outcome Model</i> (DV = Satisfaction with Investment)						
Constant	4.982	.769	6.475	.000	3.465	6.498
Fulfillment of Purpose	.016	.088	.186	.852	-.156	.189
Character of Service	.211	.090	2.356	.019	.035	.388
<i>Outcome Model</i> (DV = Satisfaction with Investment)						
Constant	6.143	.597	10.296	.000	4.967	7.320
Fulfillment of Purpose	0.092	.082	1.114	.266	-.071	.254

Note: N = 215. SE = standard error

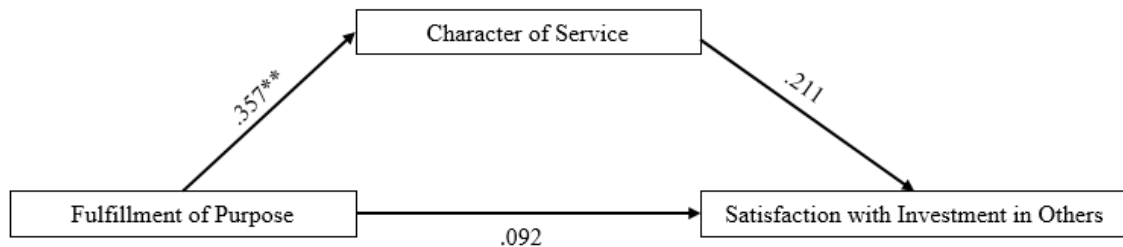


Figure 3. The mediation model in which fulfilment of purpose predicts satisfaction with investment in others through character of service.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **Discussion**

As employee development continues to be a differentiator for organizations striving to keep up with complex workplace demands, finding a scalable, effective method is necessary to meet the challenge (Crane & Hartwell, 2018). Certain characteristics of an organization's leaders can be used to support employees to develop their follower's thoughts, behaviors, and abilities (Kark & Shamir, 2013; Howell & Avolio, 1993; McKenna & Brown, 2011). The current study contributes to the existing literature by exploring which attributes of a leader enable them to make developmental investments in their followers. This chapter begins with a summary of the findings as they relate to the primary hypotheses examined in the current research study. Next, I discuss the complexity of the fulfillment of purpose and satisfaction with investment in others constructs and implications of this complexity on the current study. I will then review potential implications for theory and practice that addresses the expansion of the constructs. Finally, I address potential limitations of the present study and recommendations for future research.

### **Summary of Findings**

The purpose of this study was to expand the current body of research on the construct of investing in others and to explore the relationship between fulfillment of purpose and satisfaction with investment in others. Specifically, I examined how the relationship changed between an individual's fulfillment of purpose and satisfaction with investment in others when looking at an individual's character of service for others.

Hypothesis 1 examined the relationship between an individual's character of service to others and a leader's level of satisfaction in their investment in others proposing the two constructs to be positively related. Initial correlation analysis reported in Table 2 supported a positive significant relationship between character of service and satisfaction with investment in others. Additionally, this hypothesis was investigated as a simple regression, which yielded a significant relationship between a leader's character of service and their satisfaction with investment in others. The finding suggests that leaders who believe they are in position to serve others and are called to improve themselves for the sake of others are likely to experience greater levels of satisfaction in their investment in others. As suggested by others, leadership behaviors inherently impact a leader's ability to make a developmental investment in others (McKenna & Brown, 2011; Howell & Avolio, 1993). The findings of the current study support this theoretical notion and are consistent with the idea that organizations need leaders who have a character that focuses on serving the needs of others.

One responsibility of an organizational leader is to invest in members within their organization (Hagen & Aguilar, 2012). The impact of leaders on individuals, teams, and organizational outcomes include greater levels of empowerment, self-management, individual learning, group productivity, job performance, and team effectiveness (Ammeter & Dukerich, 2002; Kirkman & Rosen, 1999; Hagen & Aguilar, 2012). Per the findings of the current study, having a character of service significantly impacts a leader's perception that they are investing in others well, above and beyond those with a lower character of service. With a leader's behaviors impacting all levels of a business, organizations should consider how they should recognize, support, and develop a leader's

character of service with the aim of leaders then deepening the support and investment they provide to their employees.

While this finding is applicable in multiple leader-follower contexts, three areas in which these findings may be especially important are in the fields of healthcare, teaching, and parenting. Within the healthcare field are doctors, nurses, technicians, and specialists all responsible for caring for their patients. Specifically within trauma centers, healthcare workers are responsible for responding efficiently and effectively, regardless of the patient that comes into their center. Healthcare leaders within trauma centers that have a high character of service transfer behaviors and skills to those they work with within the trauma center, thus enabling others within the trauma center to be prepared for the next emergency that arises. Similarly, teachers are tasked with supporting the learning and development of their students. Administrators who ensure they are providing a satisfying investment in their teachers by having a character of service support not only the development of their teachers, but the teacher's ability to fulfill their roles in the classroom. Finally, parents are in a unique position when it comes to making a satisfying investment in others as their others or those they lead are their children. There is no option for taking a sick or vacation day. Arming parents with the characteristics of a character of service will lead to parents feeling increased satisfaction with their investment in their children. Each of these scenarios make ongoing positive impacts through emotional contagion, or the idea that followers learn behaviors from those that lead them (Hagen & Aguilar, 2012). Future research should expand on these findings to identify methods of building a character of service within leaders.

Hypothesis 2 tested whether a leader's character of service had a moderating effect on the relationship between fulfillment of purpose and satisfaction in investment in others. Results were non-significant, indicating that the relationship between fulfillment of purpose and satisfaction in investment in others did not depend on a leader's character of service.

Finally, the exploratory mediation analysis predicted that leaders who have higher fulfillment of purpose would be positively related to a leader's satisfaction with investment in others through the mediating mechanism of character of service, such that individuals who score higher on character of service will report a higher satisfaction with investments in others. The mediating relationship of fulfillment of purpose to satisfaction with investment in others through character of service was not significant.

Lack of support for the moderation model, as well as the exploratory mediation model, could be a result of varying factors. In addition to the measurement limitations outlined below, there may be situational or environmental factors that prohibit a leader from feeling a sense of satisfaction in their investment in others. For example, a leader may not have the time or space to have developmental conversations with the individual they are investing in. A lack of time, appropriate environment, or organizational support are factors outside of the proposed study that could prevent a significant outcome.

**Fulfillment of purpose.** The inability to predict the outcome variable, satisfaction with investment in others, could be connected to the fluidity of the predictor, fulfillment of purpose. That is, there are varying ways in which an individual could define purpose, thus impacting the degree to which one can identify the extent to which that purpose is fulfilled. Fulfillment of purpose can be measured by an individual's acts of participation



and behavior in pursuit of a desired outcome, in accordance with an individual's level of life satisfaction, or the extent to which that fulfillment of purpose provides a sense of meaning (Hagmaier & Abele, 2015; Hirschi & Herrmann, 2013; Peterson, Park, & Seligman, 2005). The complexity with interpreting how an individual defines their purpose alters how they rate the fulfillment of that purpose. With this in mind, there may be methods of ensuring the respondent is defining their purpose to an appropriate level of specificity that provides a valid measurement of fulfillment. One method could be by providing additional instruction when asking the respondent to respond. An additional method could include encouraging the respondent to use a goal setting framework when participants define their purpose (Locke & Latham, 2002) such that the respondents definition includes specificity, a measurement strategy, includes analyzing needs and resources of fulfilling that purpose, and implementing a feedback loop into the process (London, 2003).

**Satisfaction with investment in others.** Within the current study, there were two construct measurement related concerns that may have prevented the ability to predict the outcome variable. First, satisfaction with investment in others was measured from the perspective of the leader. Satisfaction with investment in others can be driven by multiple components including the type, frequency, and quality of the relationship and interactions between a leader and the individual they are actively developing (House et al., 1988). In order to increase the robustness of the outcome variables measurement beyond a leader's satisfaction in their investment, additional data points including tracking key outcome metrics and obtaining the identified other's satisfaction should be considered. Additionally, within the current study, the individual the leader identified as their other

was self-identified by the respondent. For future research, the identified other should be narrowed to ensure the leader has identified an individual who they lead within their formal leadership role.

**Significant correlations.** Initial correlations reported in Table 1 showed a significant positive relationship between fulfillment of purpose and character of service. These were also significantly positively related to age, meaning age of respondent resulted in higher ratings of fulfillment of purpose and character of service. Within the current study, age was not a variable that was controlled for, meaning the model was not run to identify whether age played a significant part in the relationship. Future research should investigate how age factors into a person's ability to fulfill their purpose and have a character that focuses on serving others.

### **Limitations**

Although the findings of the current study provide support for the first hypothesis, several limitations should be noted.

**Measurement.** The variables of fulfillment of purpose and satisfaction with investment in others were measured by single-item measures and lack validation. Because the measures consisted of only one item each, this prevents the ability to conduct validation testing and examine the convergent and discriminant validity of the scales (Byrne, 2010). These limits could lead to possible measurement error by enhancing the relationship between the variables of interest and increase the likelihood of committing a Type I error (Shadish et al., 2001).

**Sample.** Even though the sample was relatively diverse in terms of gender, age, and organizational setting, participants were fairly homogenous in other potentially

impactful categories. Of the participant group, 73.9% identified as Caucasian and 66.3% identified as Catholic which may influence the reports of fulfillment of purpose and character of service given the emphasis on serving others as an act of faith.

Furthermore, the generalizability of the current findings is limited due to the sample and participant response rates. Out of 1,943 participants in the entire database, only 215 met inclusion criteria equating to only an 11.06% inclusion rate. Initial means and correlations reported in Table 1 showed averages above the median score on a 10-point Likert scale and significant positive relationships between age, fulfillment of purpose, and character of service. The lack of variation in responses could prevent the detection of a significant effect. While various factors lead to the selected sample (e.g. formal leadership role required, not all participants completed all assessments), results could vary when attempting to replicate the study's findings with a different sample. Future research should investigate a more diverse sample and aim for a greater response rate.

**Mono-method bias.** As described by Shadish and colleagues (2001), when one method is used to collect all measurement of the variables of interest (e.g. self-report measures) mono-method bias is introduced. Mono-method bias can impair one's ability to detect a reliable effect in a study because all variables are coming from one source (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). In the current study, all variables were collected via self-report. A Harman's Single Factor Test was ran on the data to decipher the extent to which mono-method bias impacted the current study. Although the findings were less than the 50 percent threshold (27% of the variance were attributed to a single factor), future research should examine alternative measures of these constructs. For

instance, satisfaction in investment in others could be measured from the perspective of the individual receiving the investment to identify their level of satisfaction.

**Skewness.** The variables of character of service and satisfaction with investment in others were negatively skewed, indicating that participants scored higher on average than a normal distribution on these measures. This could be a result of a few varying reasons. Specifically, self-serving bias could have impacted scores on these variables (Campbell & Sedikides, 1999). Leaders perhaps perceive having a character of service and satisfaction with investment in others as important leadership characteristics, thus reporting themselves as higher on these measures. Also, the negatively skewed data could be a result of the homogeneity of the sample. Future research should examine alternative methods of measurement with a more diverse sample.

**Possibilities for future research.** Within the current results, there are still ways for future researchers to expand upon employee development research. Expanding on this body of research has the possibility to provide organizations with tangible ways to deliver employee development continuously rather than from time to time (Kegan & Lahey, 2016). Future researchers could expand upon this work in the following ways (a) incorporate additional items to encompass multiple data points for measuring an individual's fulfillment of purpose and their satisfaction with investment in others, (b) consider a definition of purpose for participants to use as currently the tool allows for participants to define their own purpose, (c) run a comparison between groups across different context settings (e.g., volunteer, for-profit business, education) to identify if organizational setting impacts the relationship between fulfillment of purpose and satisfaction with investment in others, (d) track individual's responses across time as

fulfillment of purpose and character of service may develop through experiences and aging, and (e) implement a goal setting structure to build specificity in the definition and measurement of fulfillment of purpose. These additional pieces of information may be beneficial for future researchers to understand what impacts a satisfying investment in others. By broadening the scope of the research in these ways, researchers may be able to contribute additional practical ways in which organizations can predict a leader's investment in others.

### **Conclusion**

As discussed within the current study, finding an effective method of developing employees is vital for organizations to keep up with the competitive nature of business (Crane & Hartwell, 2018). Through leader-member interactive relationships, organizations can achieve the development of their employees in an effective, scalable manner (Wang & Yuan, 2017; Hagen & Aguilar, 2012). Without rising to this challenge, organizations lose the opportunity to act as incubators of capability for their employees (Kegan & Lahey, 2016), thus falling behind from an organizational perspective and doing a disservice to employees. The current study sought to examine the impact of a leader's purpose and character of service has on the satisfaction with investment in a leader's followers. Although the overall model was non-significant, this study does expand the current research by identifying that investing in leaders who have a character that supports serving others does positively impact their investment in those they serve.

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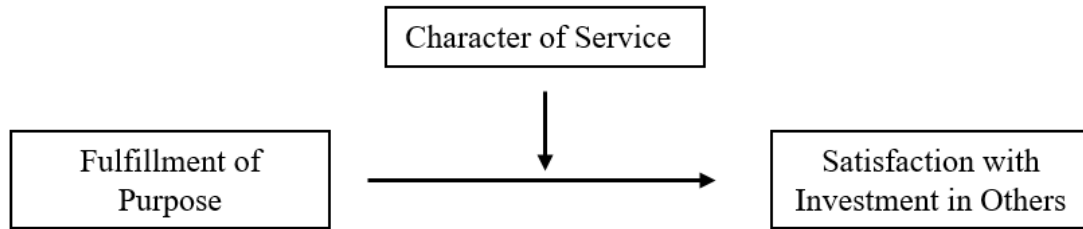
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**Appendix A: Hypothesized Model**

**Appendix A: Hypothesized Model**

*Figure 1.* This figure depicts the hypothesized model in which a character of calling impacts the relationship between fulfillment of purpose and investment in others.

**Appendix B:** Fulfillment of Purpose Scale

### **Appendix B: Fulfillment of Purpose Scale**

This item is located within the Calling and Purpose Inventory (CAPI).

#### **Calling and Purpose Inventory Instructions:**

A purpose in life includes many things. Like a hammer that is designed for the purpose of pounding and pulling nails, you may feel that you are designed for a specific purpose. That purpose likely includes things you enjoy, your unique strengths and contributions, and what you feel most compelled to do next. Take a moment to answer these questions about your purpose.

1. If you believe you have a purpose in life, what is that purpose? [Open Text]
2. To what extent are you fulfilling your purpose in life? (1 = Not at all, 10 = To a Great Extent).

**Appendix C: Character of Service Scale**

### **Appendix C: Character of Service Scale**

These items are within the Developmental Readiness Index.

#### **Developmental Readiness Index Instructions:**

Read the questions below and indicate the extent to which each statement is true of you.

Answer each question on a scale from 1 to 10 (1 = Not at all true of you, 10 = Absolutely true of you).

#### Character of Service Items:

1. (WPR1324) You are serving others around you who are in need of something that you are in a position to provide.
2. (WPR2390) Called to serve others with a character and calling to learn & improve for the sake of others.



**Appendix D: Investment in Others Scale**

**Appendix D. Investment in Others Scale**

This item is within the People Investment Plan Assessment.

1. How would this person identify you?
2. If you are currently employed, do they work in your organization?
3. What does this person need from you? If you don't know, that's okay. Go ahead and ask them.
4. What matters most to this person? If you don't know, that's okay. Go ahead and ask them.
5. What are their greatest skills or competencies?
6. What do you appreciate about the character of this person?
7. What, if it were further developed or overcome, would strengthen this person?
8. What are you doing to help unleash their potential?
9. On a scale from 1 (Not at all satisfied) to 10 (Very satisfied), how satisfied are you with how you are currently investing in this person? This might include how you communicate with them or how often, or other things that impact your satisfaction.
10. What could you do to increase this score in the next 3 months?
11. How often have you been in contact with this person in the last 6 months? (i.e., email, phone, face to face, or other type of contact)

**Appendix E:** Demographic Items

**Appendix E: Demographic Items**

**What is your sex?**

- Male
- Female

**What is your ethnicity? Please check all that apply.**

- Caucasian/White
- African American/Black
- Hispanic/Latino
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Native American
- Other

**Are you currently in a formal leadership role (e.g., do you have people you are responsible for leading)?**

- Yes
- No

**What is your religious affiliation?**

- Catholic
- Protestant
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Buddhist
- Hindu
- Atheist/Agnostic
- Other
- N/A