



Exemplars of Servant Leadership in Sport: Henrik and Daniel Sedin

L'exercice du leadership engagé dans le sport : Pleins feux sur Henrik et Daniel Sedin

Carolyn Crippen
University of Victoria

David Nagel
University of Victoria

Abstract

Servant leadership develops caring, respectful, inclusive communities. The purpose of this article is to investigate its presence from the perspective of two elite NHL hockey players and their leadership style on and off the ice. A face-to-face interview was conducted with Henrik and Daniel Sedin, of the Vancouver Canucks. This case study provides evidence to support the existence of the servant leadership philosophy in sport. In this time of societal violence, especially in hockey, perhaps the Sedins' modeling of a servant-leader attitude, coupled with their elite status can be a beacon for youth today.

Someone who is admired, as a leader in sport often is, can change the significance of what might otherwise go unnoticed (Shogan, 2007, p 16).

Résumé

Le leadership engagé contribue au développement de collectivités attentionnées, respectueuses et inclusives. Le présent article vise à approfondir cette notion en s'intéressant au style de leadership exercé par deux joueurs de hockey d'élite de la LNH sur la glace et dans d'autres sphères. Un entretien en personne a été réalisé avec Henrik et Daniel Sedin de l'équipe des Canucks de Vancouver. Cette étude de cas confirme l'existence d'une philosophie de leadership engagé dans l'univers du sport. En cette époque marquée par la violence sociétale, en particulier dans le domaine du hockey, le leadership engagé dont font montre les frères Sedin, jumelé à leur statut de joueurs d'élite, peut constituer un véritable phare pour la jeunesse d'aujourd'hui.

Une personne admirée, comme le sont souvent les vedettes sportives, est en mesure de donner un sens différent à ce qui qui serait autrement passé inaperçu. (Shogan, 2007, p 16).

Introduction

If we use the National Hockey League (NHL) as a general reference, the goal is to score against the opposing team, while not being scored upon, and to protect and support each other in the process. Within a hockey team the players are constantly leading and following back and forth as they move over the ice in front of the team goalie. Specific athletes illustrate a variety of functions/roles: e.g., there is the enforcer, who tends to intimidate and who uses body size to overpower members of the opposing team; there are centers, who set up plays and are often the strongest skaters on the ice; there are defensemen, who guard their own goalie from intrusion; and there is the captain who is supposed to be the one who speaks to the officials. Each member contributes when needed, but even so, certain elite athletes are acknowledged as the key leaders on their teams, often identified as team captains and/or select players who score or defend well. This is not an exhaustive list, of course. Obviously, a well-balanced and successful team needs players that respond with their particular leadership skills for the good of the team as a whole.

Since 1980, I have been a student and researcher of leadership, particularly servant-leadership (Greenleaf, 1991), in the areas of education and community (Crippen, 2005, 2006, 2010, 2011, 2012). Recently, my attention has shifted to sport and hockey. After relocating permanently to the province of British Columbia in December 2009, I decided to become acquainted with the local NHL team, the Vancouver Canucks. I started by watching their televised games, though I did not know any names or players. However, leadership is usually easily recognized in team sports, and something happened over the first couple of games that I watched. I noticed there were two players with red hair and red beards that seemed different in their approach to the game and the dynamics between them, the other players and officials. Their leadership seemed different than usually witnessed in professional sport, namely they seemed to exemplify a particular philosophy of leadership known as servant leadership. A much closer and lengthier investigation was necessary to validate my initial impression and to see if there was actual evidence to support my thoughts.

The two red headed players were twin brothers, Henrik and Daniel Sedin, who became a catalyst for an in-depth case study (Creswell, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Initially, I started writing down my observations and listening carefully to the announcers of the games. I began to collect newspaper articles about the Vancouver Canucks. I recorded and/or watched every televised Canucks hockey game from December 2009 until February 2013, broadcast on Sportsnet Pacific, CBC Hockey Night in Canada, and TSN (CTV) television networks. That was just the beginning of a three-year research journey investigating the leadership of Daniel and Henrik Sedin.

Leadership though is a broad topic with many interpretations; hence a definition presented by renowned leadership scholar, James McGregor Burns (1978) will provide the foundation for our discussion. He defines leadership “as leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations – the wants and needs, the aspirations and the expectations of both leaders and followers” (p. 19). Additional, yet

similar, clarity is offered by sports psychologist Daniel Wann (1997), defining leadership as “a behavioral process in which one group member influences the other members regarding the attainment of the group’s goals” (p. 128). Most of the leadership literature in sport relates to the role of the coach (Burton & Peachey, 2013; Rieke, Hammermeister, & Chase, 2008; Shogan, 2007; Wann, 1997), but I believe a particular form of leadership, namely servant leadership, exists among a small group of elite athletes.

An Introduction to Daniel and Henrik Sedin

Henrik (6 minutes older) and Daniel Sedin are identical twins born in the small town of Ornskoldsvik, Sweden on September 26, 1980. Their father, Tommy, is a school vice-principal, who also played hockey and coached them as youth and their mother, Tora, is a nurse. They have two older brothers: Stefan and Peter. The family of boys was involved in sports from a very young age, playing soccer and hockey. Daniel and Henrik began organized hockey at the age of eight, and did not play on the same hockey line until they were fourteen. They are both married to women from their home village. Henrik has two children and Daniel has three. They reside in Vancouver and return to Sweden each summer to spend time with their extended family.

They joined the Vancouver Canucks in 1999 and have remained ever since. Daniel and Henrik are known for their effectiveness in playing off of one another. Henrik is a skilled passer and playmaker, while Daniel is a natural goal scorer. In 2010, Henrik won the Art Ross Trophy for leading the NHL in scoring points during the regular season and the Hart Memorial Trophy for the player judged to be the most valuable player in the league by the Professional Hockey Writers Association. In 2011, Daniel won the Ted Lindsay Award as the most outstanding player in the league as voted by the NHL Players Association and the Art Ross Trophy for the point-scoring leader. Henrik is classified as an Ironman, having played over 600+ games in a row.

The following paper addresses two elite players, Henrik and Daniel Sedin and their leadership approach both on and off the ice. Four sections form the paper: (a) an introduction to a leadership philosophy, not often identified in sport, called servant leadership; (b) a synthesis of qualitative research, a case study, used to investigate and analyze the particular leadership style of the Sedin twins; (c) evidence of any servant leadership competencies (Sipe & Frick, 2009) identified from an interview with Daniel and Henrik Sedin; and (d) a conclusion to the paper which addresses the possible value of the servant-leader philosophy to sport literature, plus direction for further research.

The Philosophy of Servant Leadership

Exactly, what does this term mean? Robert K. Greenleaf (1904-1990) coined the term servant leadership in a small 37-page essay titled *The Servant as Leader*, written in 1970 just after he reached retirement at age 66. Greenleaf was in middle management at AT&T and was interested in building caring, inclusive, supportive communities. He lectured at M.I.T. and Dartmouth, and was a colleague of James McGregor Burns whose definition of leadership is cited above. Greenleaf believed that one had to first want to serve before leading, and it was through one’s service that a person was recognized as a leader. He defined a servant-leader as:

A servant-leader is servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: do those served grow as persons; do they while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And what of the least privileged in society: will they benefit, or at least, not be further deprived? (Greenleaf, 1991, p. 15)

It is important to explain the term *servant* in servant-leader. Greenleaf believed that when one serves, "one is not a service provider, a martyr or slave" (Sipe & Frick, 2009, p. 38). The servant is one who "consciously nurtures the mature growth of self, other people, institutions, and communities – the objective of which is to stimulate thought and action for building a better, more caring society" (p. 38). Much has now been written about Greenleaf's servant leadership philosophy with Larry Spears (former Executive Director of the Greenleaf Center in Indianapolis, Indiana) as the driving force behind its analysis (Frick & Spears, 1996; Spears, 1998a, 1998b).

Spears (1998a) identified ten servant-leader characteristics that appeared consistently throughout all of Greenleaf's writing: (a) listening, (b) empathy, (c) awareness, (d) healing, (e) persuasion, (f) conceptualization, (g) foresight, (h) stewardship, (i) commitment to the growth of others, and (j) building community. It should be noted that those who practice the philosophy of servant leadership and aspire to being servant-leaders have the same strengths and weaknesses of all human beings. Thus, a perfect servant-leader seldom exhibits all ten characteristics: it is something to strive for during life's journey. A list of ideal servant-leaders could include Mary Parker Follett, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Stephen Lewis, Nelson Mandela, Elizabeth May, Parker Palmer, and Eleanor Roosevelt.

More recently, Sipe & Frick (2009) have defined a servant-leader as "a person of character who puts people first. He or she is a skilled communicator, a compassionate collaborator who has foresight, is a systems thinker, and leads with moral authority" (p. 4). Listed below are seven pillars and 21 core competencies related to each of the seven, as identified by Sipe and Frick. Each pillar contains three competencies and the authors suggest, "these competencies can also represent a set of performance appraisal metrics-barometers of professional growth for the continuous evaluation of your leadership strengths and development needs" (p. 6). The seven pillars are:

Pillar I – Person of character: Makes insightful, ethical, and principle-centered decisions

- maintains integrity
- demonstrates humility
- serves a higher purpose (p. 15).

Pillar II – Puts people first: Helps others meet their highest priority

- displays a servant's heart
- is mentor minded
- shows care & concern (p. 34).

Pillar III – Skilled communicator: Listens earnestly and speaks effectively

- demonstrates empathy
- invites feedback
- communicates persuasively (p. 45).

Pillar IV – Compassionate collaborator: Strengthens relationships, supports diversity, and creates a sense of belonging

- expresses appreciation
- builds teams & communities
- negotiates conflict (p. 77).

Pillar V – Foresight: Imagines possibilities, anticipates the future

- visionary
- displays creativity
- takes courageous, decisive action (p. 104).

Pillar VI – Systems Thinker: Thinks and acts strategically, leads change effectively and balances the whole with the sum of its parts

- comfortable with complexity
- demonstrates adaptability
- considers the “greater good” (p. 130).

Pillar VII – Moral Authority: Worthy of respect, inspires trust and confidence, and establishes quality standards for performance

- accepts & delegates responsibility
- shares power and control
- creates a culture of accountability (p. 155).

Because I was very familiar with Spears’ ten characteristics and cognizant of my bias in this regard, I wanted a more recent framework that was deeper and broader in scope. Careful scrutiny of the two lists offered by Spears (1998a) alongside Sipe and Frick (2009) reveals much overlap and consistency, though the pillars identified by Sipe and Frick (2009) are more profound than those identified by Spears (1998a) for two reasons. First, Frick (2004) was the author of Robert K. Greenleaf’s comprehensive biography, and had access when doing his research to all the Greenleaf papers and related documents over Greenleaf’s lifetime. Second, it seemed to me that Frick’s knowledge base of servant leadership would provide a rigorous contribution for analysis and Frick’s research was inclusive of the current growing body of literature on servant leadership over the last ten years: i.e., Frick and Spears (1996) reviewed Greenleaf’s personal and professional philosophy; Russell (2001) investigated the role of values in servant leadership; Stone, Russell, and Patterson (2004) looked at the differences and similarities between servant leadership and transformational leadership; Wong and Page (2003) designed a servant-leader 360 scale to identify qualities in servant-leaders. Sipe and Frick (2009) provide the best synthesis to date of the growing literature on servant leadership.

The 21 competencies (Sipe & Frick, 2009) easily slotted into the ten characteristics identified by Spears (1998a), yet expanded upon the understanding of each. Without reviewing the entire 21 competencies, suffice to say that foresight is present in both lists, strengthened by the competencies of vision, creativity, and decisive action in the competencies. As well, listening incorporates feedback, expresses appreciation, and communicates persuasively. Commitment to the growth of others is consistent with Sipe and Frick’s (2009) serves a higher purpose, is mentor-minded, invites feedback, shares power and control, demonstrates adaptability, considers the greater good, and builds teams and communities. Hence, the seven pillars and the 21 competencies effectively provide a conceptual framework for the case study, enhancing upon Spears’ (1998a) ten characteristics.

The Case Study Synthesis

The following section will explain the choice of qualitative research and the strategy of a case study approach. Creswell (2009) explains, “Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals to a social or human problem” (p. 4). Henrik and Daniel Sedin were the two individuals and their leadership style and interaction/behaviour as hockey players was the focus of the research. Creswell provides a clear description of the case study approach as a strategy of inquiry in qualitative research, in which the “researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, of one or more individuals. Cases are bound by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time” (p. 13). Although I initially became aware of these players in December 2009, I did not formalize the data gathering process until late spring of 2010, which continued until February 2013.

A case study approach provided a research method for in-depth analysis of these two elite hockey players and their *modus operandi*. Two research questions framed the study:

Research question #1: How did the Sedins demonstrate their unique leadership style in hockey?

Research question #2: Specifically, was there evidence to support the philosophy of servant leadership?

Data Collection

Yin (2009) suggests six main sources of data for case studies, of which one is an interview. Questions were developed with my doctoral student, Dave Nagel, to be used in a personal interview with the Sedin twins. We sifted through the list of questions over two weeks, revisiting the wording and intent of each, and eventually selected 17 questions (Appendix A). I attempted to achieve qualitative validity (Creswell, 2009, p. 190) over the research time period by frequently doing informal checks with two of my doctoral students who play hockey, several friends who attend the Canucks games in Vancouver on a regular basis, and other colleagues in my department for their observations and perceptions of the Canucks games and the Sedins as players.

The Process.

Gaining access for an interview with the Sedins proved to be a lengthy process. I realized this particular research was not going to be completed quickly and would require patience on my part as a researcher. As a member of the Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) at the University of Victoria (UVic) and as a researcher, I am providing these details so they may be helpful to others embarking on research that involves a major commercial organization.

I first asked colleagues within the Faculty of Education at UVic, including Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education, who might have connections with anyone in the Canuck organization. No one could help. Next, I made several phone calls to Rogers Arena in Vancouver and finally reached a contact person in Canucks Communication. I explained who I was and asked what chain of command I should follow. After several phone calls, I moved to sending e-mail correspondence, though this was not fruitful.

After five months, I finally decided to write to the Canucks senior administration in a formal (university letterhead), two-page, single-spaced letter (August 2, 2011) detailing my research and why I wanted to interview the Sedin twins. Letters were sent to Mike Gillis (General Manager), Alain Vigneault (Coach), Henrik and Daniel Sedin, and Jennifer Rollins (Communications Coordinator). When I returned after Labour Day weekend 2011, there was a voice message from T.C. Carling (TC) – Vice-President of Communications & Community Partnerships and the Executive Director of Canucks for Kids Fund – expressing an interest in my letter that had been vetted with the Canucks management.

TC was involved in the start-up of the new 2011-2012 season and we played phone tag for a few days. Once we connected, he explained that it was important that the players were protected, etc. I explained about the Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) process and that I would send him the completed 18-page ethics application form to review. UVic HREB approved the submission and a copy was sent to TC, which he shared with Daniel and Henrik. My formal letter of introduction was very detailed about my intentions and background; I wanted complete transparency in the procedure of safety checks along the way.

By September 15, 2012 it was decided to hold the interview on Monday, November 14, 2011, first thing in the morning. I was permitted to bring my doctoral student, Dave Nagel, with me to do the tape recording of the session. We arrived at Rogers Arena security and signed in at 8:15AM, after which TC escorted us up to the second floor Conference Room. The interview lasted 75 minutes and the Sedins answered all questions carefully and fully.

I had sent the 17 interview questions previously to them (through TC). I felt this was important because Swedish is their first language and I wanted to give them time to reflect upon their responses. We also sent a brief biography about ourselves so that the Sedins would have some basic familiarity with who we were. Information such as Dave playing hockey and my son having the same birthday as the twins were mentioned. We were just trying to make some connections before meeting them that morning by “breaking the ice”.

There were ground rules that we agreed upon in my early conversations with TC: Dave would transcribe the interview and the transcription tape would be sent to TC and he would deliver it to the Sedins. Once they reviewed the transcription and agreed with the content and accuracy, we could then begin to write an article. When the article was completed, it was sent to TC for sharing with the Sedins, after which they all accepted the content and gave permission for the article to be forwarded to a journal for peer review. The first article was submitted in spring 2012 and accepted for fall 2013 publication in the *International Journal of Servant Leadership*. This present paper is the second academic article, which will go through the same approval process before submission.

Data Analysis

I am a qualitative, archival researcher and am used to the slow, tedious work needed to sift and cluster artifacts, photographs, newspaper clippings, and recorded narratives, and I was comfortable with that process. Creswell (2009) states:

The data analysis involves making sense out of text and image data. It involves preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and

deeper into understanding the data (some qualitative researchers like to think of this as peeling back the layers of an onion), representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data (p.183).

He further suggests, “case study research involves a detailed description of the setting or individuals, followed by analysis of the data for themes or issues” (p. 184). So, I returned to my big paper approach of clustering the comments from the complete transcript of the Sedin interview, in order to respond to Research question#1: How did the Sedins demonstrate their unique style in hockey?

I reread the transcript completely several times over two days “to obtain a general sense of the information and to reflect on its overall meaning” (p. 185). I started to code the interview text, by means of thematic analysis, into clusters or similar chunks and then into categories. I used coloured highlighters/markers to indicate common ideas/topics as themes began to take shape. The next section outlines the five themes that emerged from the thematic analysis.

Emergent Themes from the Transcript

The following five themes emerged from the Sedin interview transcript: (a) family values/culture, (b) work ethic, (c) building community, (d) caring/respectful character, and (e) growth/learning.

Family Values/Culture

The Sedins were consistent and repetitive about the importance of their parents and especially their older brothers, Stefan and Peter, in their lives. The boys were the 6th generation to live in the same family home. They were always involved in discussions, outings or games in Sweden as a family. As youngsters the twins’ inclusion was transferred to the schoolyard and into sports. Within their cultural values, a mutual respect, regardless of age or role in the family, was always demonstrated. This mutuality is reflected in their team dynamics today. The twins speak clearly about this pattern of behaviour in the interview:

Henrik Sedin (HS): We were taught from early on about helping, and helping out, that we were important in our family. When we were sitting around and talking, that our thoughts and ideas were as important as anyone else’s. Even from when we were little. And also, we had two brothers... they always let us be involved with their friends and what they were doing and I think that taught us a lot of things when we grew up.

Daniel Sedin (DS): I think that’s true, our brothers always made us a big part of their friends and we could always play with them, and I think that’s been in our life since that happened. I mean we all try to help others, and make everyone feel like they’re involved.

Each summer the Sedins return to Sweden, where they are recognized as outstanding athletes, known as the Fire Ants because of their red hair. They have won many awards in Sweden including the prestigious 1999 Golden Puck Award in hockey. It is important that their children reinforce the bond with grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins in order to maintain the connection with their Swedish culture and the Ornskoldsvik community in Sweden. Their father, Tommy, is involved in charity sports activities in Sweden and this practice seems to be inherent in the Sedin twins focus on

service also. They explain about their approach with their children and how they model the concept of putting people first:

HS: You treat them as what they do and what they say as, it's important to us, and that they're not just kids, and we try to feel as they're important and to treat everyone else like they want to be treated themselves. And that's the way we've been brought up.

DS: Yeah, it's tough, but I think, when we're home we really have a lot of quality time with our kids. We take them to the park, and have them spend time with Henrik's kids, and other friends too. I think to teach them these things; I think they need to spend time, a lot of time, with other kids, and grownups too. To make them understand the values that we try to teach them.

It was interesting to note that before hockey practice both Henrik and Daniel drive their children to school each morning when they are in Vancouver and not travelling on the road with the team. Although elite players, there is a deliberate effort as parents and fathers to create a sense of normality in their relationship with their children.

Work Ethic

Both brothers emphasize the importance of constant hard work and practice to improve. While in Sweden each summer, they continually work out, focusing on speed and strength in particular:

HS: I don't know, there's always some things you can get better at. I mean, we're still not the fastest skaters on the ice. I don't know how much faster we can get, but there's always something you can work on. Our shots can be better, at least mine. So there's always minor things you can get better at, and I think once you get to a point that you feel that you've reached your peak, that's the time when you got to maybe take a look at retiring.

DS: Yeah, I think so too. When you start to think that, you can't get any better; I think that's when things start to go the other way. So you always have to look for things that can make you better and that's the only way to stay out there.

Henrik and Daniel practice over and over to achieve the special dynamic they have on the ice. It does not come without a commitment to strenuous workouts that involve repetition and drill. They continue to raise the bar on their skill level; always aiming to do things better:

DS: We think hockey the same way always... we've practiced together for so long, I mean, I know what I should, what I would have done in a situation where he (HS) is right now. Like, on the ice, I think we know what the other's going to do.

HS: I think we've been through every possible situation on the ice, we've been through at least ten times, and if he has the puck behind the net, and he skates one way I know where he wants me to go, and the same thing goes if I have the puck, and if I'm crossing the blue-line and he is behind me, or whatever, we've been through those situations a lot of times. It makes it easier.

I asked about the moments before the game and their reflective, quiet approach with their heads down sitting silently on the bench in the locker room. This was Daniel's reply:

DS: I think at that moment you've done everything you can to prepare and you just get ready for your game. I think, on our team at least, we try to prepare, it's

more the day before the game. I mean, you talk to guys; you talk about what you're going to do tomorrow. When that time comes, you want to go out there and show that you've been preparing the right way, and you're ready to go.

Building Community

The Sedins commented on their involvement and commitment to many types of community: their community of Ornskoldsvik, Sweden; the Vancouver Canucks organization as community; the team as a community; and the local community of Vancouver in particular. Although extremely humble and private about their financial support to the local community, it was revealed in 2010, by the media, that Henrik and Daniel had jointly donated 1.5 million dollars to the BC Children's Hospital. They are genuine about their desire to support all children and adults:

HS: I think for us, it's really important that everyone feels involved. It doesn't matter if you're not playing, or if you're playing four minutes. We try to have them involved, having them feeling maybe as a bigger part of the team, as big a part of the team as they can. That's really important to us, that we have everyone feeling important.

DS: I think when we first got here, ten or eleven years ago, that was the first thing we got taught. We realized that it is a big part of being a Canuck, helping out in the community, and going to the hospital and seeing kids, and that's probably the biggest part of being a Canuck... So, it's an important part of our lives, and especially when we've got kids ourselves, you realize how important those places are.

During our conversation Henrik recalls a sense of building community that began from a young age:

HS: Well I think, coming back to that making everyone feel involved, I think in school and recess or gym class, I mean a lot of times there were a few guys that were maybe a bit better than everyone else, and they wanted to play whatever sport they could, and we always felt like we're going to do this as a class; we had everyone involved, like girls and maybe kids that weren't as good as everyone else and we always made them feel like they could be a part of the group.

Caring/Respectful Character

Henrik and Daniel are polite, compassionate individuals. They referred to caring many times during the interview and the importance of respect for everyone, regardless of role. New players, especially the young ones, have to adjust to playing with the Sedins. The Sedins realize and appreciate how difficult this can be and the importance of maintaining open communication:

HS: It's a tough thing for whoever plays there to be in that spot, because they know that they're going to have to score, and they're going to have to produce, and if they don't, there's going to be a different guy there... It's not easy, so we know we try to make them as comfortable as possible and have them relax and I think it's, I think we're pretty easy players to play with. We try to keep it simple a lot of times, and try to talk to them as much as possible.

They realize that they are role models and the responsibility that comes with it. This is important to them and once again they refer to their brothers in Sweden, the way they grew up and the influence of their siblings upon their own values and behaviours:

DS: Well I think; we were always role models. I mean, hockey is big in Canada, as you know. So I think we are obviously role models for a lot of kids, and people. For us, I think, when we grew up, our role models were our older brothers, and I think we realized what they meant to us, and that makes us realize how important we are maybe for kids and people in the community. So, for us growing up we were pretty much exactly how our brothers are. I mean, they taught us a lot, and their values and everything they did, they influenced us.

It was interesting to note their opinion of each other and how they want to be remembered:

HS: He (D. Sedin) cares about people; he listens to his teammates, and his friends. I mean he's there and he's fun to be around. I think that's it.

DS: I would say the same things too, but he's (H. Sedin) always a step ahead of everyone else I think in his thinking. When we come to the rink for example, he's always thinks about what needs to be done, and what players that maybe he needs to talk to. He's a step ahead of everyone else in that department, and that's what makes him a great captain and a great teammate.

HS: Yeah, I think hockey, you have a talent, and you do your best to be the best player you can be, and without that talent growing up, it's tough to get somewhere, so you get a lot of things for free in hockey, but as a person, I think that's where you can make the biggest difference, in a community or with your friends, or teammates, I think you want to treat everyone else like you want to be treated yourself, and you want to be remembered as someone that cares, and makes a difference. If it's a big difference, or a small difference, or it's just showing that you care about people or whatever, I think that's more important.

DS: Yeah, I think if teammates and people say that they enjoyed our company and that we made them better people, I think that's good enough for us.

When asked about a crucible moment (a major turning point) in their lives; they were in complete agreement about the decision they made to stay in Canada and to be true to themselves. Their strong sense of character was clearly demonstrated in this situation:

HS: We didn't have a big failure until maybe when we got over here, and we realized how tough it was over here, and we went through a tough couple of years hockey wise, and living here too without family for the first time... we had to make a choice, if we were to stay here and fight (for what they believed) or go back to Sweden and take the easier route.

Their appreciation and respect for everyone was evident when speaking about people in general along with their positive attitude. Their genuine care and concern are expressed through their actions (Sipe & Frick, 2009):

HS: It doesn't matter if it's someone that works in the building, or in the staff, or trainers, or coaches, or whatever it is. You have to feel important. It doesn't matter what you do, and that's something that I think you've got to take seriously, to say hi to people when you walk by, or whatever it is. And that's always been the way we've tried to do things, and I think it's important.

DS: Yeah, coming in with a positive attitude. There's going to be ups and downs for everyone, but if you try to stay positive and be happy, I think it can influence people to do good.

Growth/Learning

The opportunity to personally keep growing and learning remains a high priority for the Sedins. As children they watched their brothers on the ice and used their example to become better hockey players. But, they also see encouraging growth/learning in the other players on the team as a duty too:

HS: You've got to bring out the best in each and every one, and have them feel that they're a big part of the team, and it comes from talking to them, being in a relationship, or having them grow as persons, and feel that they're the best they can be (on the ice and off the ice). That's when you, I think, get better as a team.

DS: We have a group here where we have a lot of leaders, and there's times when you need to make them a leader. Hank, he's the captain, but he can't be a leader all the time. I think he needs to make other players lead to. That's a big part of a team that's successful. I think having everyone realize that they can be a leader at a certain moment, and then... you've got to let them handle the situation and make them grow. I think when you have that, everyone's taking a step and getting better, as a person, as a player. That's when you can kind of take a step back and you don't need to be a leader anymore.

Being a leader requires knowing when to step back, along with knowing when to fully engage, and having the accumulated wisdom to strike a balance in those actions:

DS: When we leave this rink we don't think about the game. The first few years I think 24/7 we thought about hockey and that's a problem. I think, when you get to the rink you focus for four hours, five hours when you're here, and then when you leave, you try to stay away from it.

Thematically, I have identified five themes that appeared in the Sedin interview, which occurred several times indicating repetition and consistency of thought, and thus were not isolated comments. Using the themes developed and the original transcript, I now turned to my second research question.

Research question #2: Specifically, was there evidence to support the philosophy of servant leadership?

Connecting the Themes to the Seven Pillars

Within the five themes mentioned above, there is evidence linking the themes to the *Seven Pillars of Servant Leadership* (Sipe & Frick, 2009). Often the evidence is overlapping, i.e., much of the theme of family values/culture illustrates that regardless of the person(s) and roles of the other people involved, the Sedins always demonstrated respect, and civility. Their regular summers in Sweden reinforce their cultural heritage for themselves and their families. They encourage participation in Canadian and Swedish activities and organizations for themselves and their children. They are guided by a strong, inclusive value system that promotes positive self-worth among everyone. Ultimately it is about being a better person and helping others to be that way too.

Relationships are important to them, on and off the ice. The twins spoke clearly about supporting other young members of the Canuck team and helping them grow and learn, especially when these young players joined them playing on the first line. The success of the team was paramount too. A servant-leader is inclusive, respectful (regardless of position) and willing to invest in the collective good. As well, opportunities

for others to develop and grow are considered critical. The emphasis on health, wisdom, freedom and autonomy of persons, rather than narrow ego needs are paramount (Sipe & Frick, 2009). They are persons of character (Pillar I) who are interested in more than just themselves, but in something beyond or greater than themselves. As compassionate collaborators (Pillar IV) they are mindful that every group has multiple leaders who serve different roles at various times toward the same result.

The theme of a strong work ethic was demonstrated with the realization that it is diligence and practice that builds an effective player, team and family structure. This includes the ability to listen to everyone and to consider carefully all decisions and repercussions with foresight (Sipe & Frick, 2009). The Sedins are not perfect and recognize their mistakes and responsibilities to each other, their team, the Canucks organization and the local communities (in Vancouver and Sweden). This is indicative of moral authority (Pillar VII) that includes accountability, delegating and accepting responsibility, plus, helping their colleagues succeed.

The themes of growth and learning, plus a thoughtful and respectful character are well demonstrated through the Sedins acting as mentors while demonstrating empathy and sensitivity, especially for young players and those who are struggling. Daniel and Henrik listen carefully to these players and offer suggestions to help them improve their game. This is indicative of putting people first (Pillar II) and also of communicating skillfully (Pillar III) with understanding.

The theme of building community includes having the big picture, a vision of the whole, seeing the team as a group directed toward a goal, with an ability to foresee plays and positions on ice and to creatively make plays to each other and members of the team. This success reinforces an outstanding part of their sportsmanship. They are system thinkers who act strategically on the ice (Pillar VI). They are courageous and dedicated to the team, as Henrik may have to leave a game for a few plays if injured, but usually returns to continue playing.

Servant leaders have foresight (Pillar V) as one of their major strengths (Greenleaf, 1991; Sipe & Frick, 2009). Henrik and Daniel strengthen relationships, yet wisely appreciate the diversity of the team players and their various strengths. The concept of team is critical, along with the feeling of inclusivity and belonging, though Daniel is aware that it is up to the players to hold each other accountable. Their comments are candid, constructive and courageous. They decided to bravely stay in Canada and to adhere to their personal style of hockey and to contribute to the culture of the Canucks organization – this was a strong indicator of the moral authority (Pillar VII) being generated within the organization through their servant leadership.

Conclusion

Although initially a skeptic of the philosophy of servant leadership existing in hockey, the evidence provided is somewhat overwhelming that both Daniel and Henrik Sedin demonstrate the seven pillars of servant-leadership. They seem unique in this approach, although additional research into other players in the NHL needs to be pursued. As well, separate interviews may glean additional perspectives. In addition, the whole issue of the Swedish cultural influence seems ripe for further investigation, as many of the new NHL players are Swedish. The next step for this research is to triangulate the

findings from the interview with print and televised media content, as well as potential interviews with those familiar with and close to Daniel and Henrik Sedin.

Provincially (within Canada), there is substantial opportunity to integrate the servant-leader concept and mentoring philosophy into the existing British Columbia (BC) Ministry of Education document, *Defining Cross-Curricula Competencies* (2013). This BC physical education curriculum encourages lifelong learning, the development of the whole child (intellectually, personally and socially), education that emphasizes critical thinking, as well as personal, social, and communication competencies. The servant leadership philosophy, the seven pillars (Sipe & Frick, 2009), and Daniel and Henrik as professional role models could provide a framework for integration into the K-7 curriculum with an emphasis on safety, fair play and leadership. This is also possible within the grade 8-10 and 11/12 curricula with an emphasis on leadership and community involvement.

In this time of societal violence, especially in hockey, perhaps the modeling of the Sedins, amidst their elite status and servant-leader attitude can be a beacon for youth today. The Sedins have told me “they are not into mean as an approach.” Daniel and Henrik Sedin demonstrate proficiency, diligence, empathy, civic values, inclusivity, and continual growth of self and others, which certainly contributes to building better serving communities, both on and off the ice.

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Appendix A - Sedin Interview Questions

1. What experiences can you recall from your childhood of helping others, or showing compassion for others?
2. Can you talk about some of the values that your parents and family instilled in you when you were growing up? How did they go about teaching you these values?
3. There are times in a person's life when character and values are tested, and they have to make a difficult decision, or take a difficult course of action. This can be called a *crucible moment*. Can you tell me of such a defining moment from your life?
4. How do you work to build relationships with your teammates, and foster a positive team climate?
5. I have watched you just before you play a game. The camera goes into the dressing room. You both seem to be sitting quietly. Please tell me what is going through your mind.
6. Much has been made in the media of you both being professional athletes with strong moral character. Stories have been written about your donation to the Children's Hospital. How do you view your responsibilities as a role model, and what are your thoughts on the importance of your actions?
7. The Vancouver Canucks are a community. Please talk about your thoughts on a leader's responsibilities to his teammates and sports community?
8. I know you return to Sweden every summer, to your original community. Can you explain why this is important to you? What do you do when you are *back home*?
9. You are both devoted fathers. What qualities are you trying to instill in your children? How do you go about this?
10. How does a leader admit and overcome his mistakes, and help his teammates admit and overcome mistakes? How do you deal with losing a game? What action, if any, do you take?
11. What do you think is the greatest strength that a leader can have in sport? Are you ever a follower and if so, when?
12. Servant-leadership places value on the skills of listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, and foresight. How do you think they fit into your particular leadership style?
13. How does an athlete who is such an intense competitor, with such a strong drive to win, lead with such a strong sense of morality, and a caring ethic?
14. In 1970, Robert Greenleaf wrote an essay called *The Servant as Leader*. This is regarded as influential work on servant-leadership, and is viewed by scholars as every bit as important today as it was when he wrote it. The most famous quote from Greenleaf (1991, p.15) is as follows:

The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived?

What message do you understand from this quote?

15. Henrik, how would you describe your brother? Daniel, how would you describe your brother?
16. How would like to be remembered? Is there anything else either of you would like to say?