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Introduction – Volume 2, Issue 1

Steven Brown, Ph.D.
Phillip Bryant, Ph.D.
Co-editors, SLTP

Introduction, Volume 2, Issue 1
Servant Leadership: Theory & Practice

It is our mission to continue advancing servant leadership through both qualitative and quantitative research that is evidence-based, drawn from the academic literature and from practitioner experience. Within this issue of Servant Leadership: Theory & Practice, we present one editorial essay, entitled Getting to Know the Elephant: A Call to Advance Servant Leadership through Construct Consensus, Empirical Evidence, and Multilevel Theoretical Development, in which we highlight some of the construct clarity issues with servant leadership as a theory. We provide a literature review concerning the construct at different levels of analysis and suggest a more holistic process approach encompassing several levels of analysis. We offer four articles. Servant Leadership, Followership, and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors in 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Centers: Implications of a National Study, by Lora Reed, focuses on the impact of servant leadership within a first-responder environment and the employee-centered outcome of organizational citizenship behaviors. We also present Implementing Servant Leadership at Cleveland Clinic: A Case Study in Organizational Change, by Joseph M. Patrnchak, a case study that illustrates the value of servant leadership within a healthcare setting. In support of that article illustrating the relationship between leadership and engagement, we feature Exploring the Effect of Transformational Leadership on Nonprofit Leader Engagement, by Robert Freeborough and Kathleen Patterson. We also offer a case study entitled The Servant Leadership of Abraham Lincoln, by Crystal Brown. It concerns servant leader values, focusing on the humility and empathy of Abraham Lincoln.
Getting to Know the Elephant: A Call to Advance Servant Leadership through Construct Consensus, Empirical Evidence, and Multilevel Theoretical Development

Steven Brown, Ph.D.
Phillip Bryant, Ph.D.

Co-editors, Servant Leadership: Theory & Practice
Editorial Essay, Volume 2, Issue 1

Abstract

This essay examines the challenges facing servant leadership as a theoretical construct, specifically the variety of definitions that results in a lack of construct clarity, the lack of agreed upon measures, and the sparse empirical evidence. This essay addresses the need for consensus, empirical research, and examination of the phenomenon of servant leadership across multiple levels of the organization.

Keywords: Servant Leadership, Construct Clarity, Construct Confusion, Construct Validity, Conceptual Disunity, Conceptual Consensus, Theory Building, Empirical Evidence, Models, Multilevel Theoretical Development

When we took on the role of editors for Servant Leadership: Theory & Practice, we made it our mission “to advance servant leadership, both as a field of academic study and as a management practice” (SLTP, 2015). Our ultimate aim is furthering thoughtful research that will influence both scholars and practitioners with the ultimate goal of creating a deeper understanding of servant leadership as a philosophy, a leadership process, and a “way of life” as Robert K. Greenleaf (1904-1990) described it. In effect, we seek to publish research in keeping with the dimensions of theoretical contribution as defined by Corley and Gioia (2011). Specifically, we are looking for original research.
that is either revelatory or incremental. Likewise, we seek research that is high in utility, be it practical, scientific, or both. In addition, we seek “prescient” research in terms of scholarly work that pursues theory down paths that will serve scholarly and practitioner needs in an ever-evolving world.

Theory helps us make sense of the complex phenomena within our world (Weick, 1995). Many scholars have provided insight into what constitutes theory (cf. Bacharach, 1989; Davis & Marquis, 2005; Kilduff, 2006; LePine & King, 2010; Suddaby, 2010, 2014; Suddaby, Hardy, & Huy, 2011; Sutton & Staw, 1995; Weick, 1989; Whetten, 1989). Some scholars opine that there is too much theory (Hambrick, 2007; Pfeffer, 2014) and yet a lack of testing theory (Davis & Marquis, 2005). Theory often proves useless to practitioners unless it is based on evidence (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2006; Rousseau, 2006; Rynes, Bartunek, & Daft, 2001), and examination of practitioner cases is not sufficient (Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006). However, focus solely on empirical development without solid theory leads to atheoretical “dustbowl empiricism” that does not truly advance our understanding (cf. Suddaby, 2014).

Within the field of servant leadership, the problem is neither the over-reliance upon empirical testing nor the lack of it, even though such empiricism is still in its nascency. The problem with servant leadership is also not the lack of usefulness to practitioners, as illustrated by the expansive practice of servant leadership within organizations of every sort. At the foundational level, the most serious issue within the theory of servant leadership is construct clarity (Suddaby, 2010).

As scholars working in the field, it is our responsibility to shed light on the phenomenon. Within this essay, we provide some basic definition to servant leadership, delineate its current status in comparison to the more scholarly developed concept of transformational leadership. We discuss the challenges facing servant leadership as a theory, offer solutions, and describe the state of findings as they relate to the “entire elephant” or “big picture” such that researchers can contemplate better approaches to advancing theory within the field.

Our commentary on this current state of servant leadership is not meant as harsh criticism but rather as a call for thoughtful organization, direction, and extension of our understanding of the servant leader phenomenon. We simply believe that servant leadership would benefit from the establishment of construct clarity in terms of definition, scope conditions, relationships with other constructs, and coherency (Suddaby, 2010). We argue that more consensus is needed in terms of what is and is not servant leadership, such that a clear, concise, and accurate definition, as well as thoughtfully circumscribed parameters. Construct confusion and conceptual disunity needs to give rise to greater construct clarity. Certainly these theoretical goals are not easily achievable given that so many scholars and practitioners differ in terms of their own opinions of the construct. However, for advancement of the theory, some organization, presentation of the similarities and differences among definitions, and conceptual consensus needs to occur.
An Unorthodox Approach to Modern Challenges

Leadership in general is considered a means of influencing followers within an organization in such a way as to direct them and motivate them toward achieving specific shared goals (Barrow, 1977; Cyert, 2006; Plsek & Wilson, 2001). Servant leadership takes what seems to be a winding road to such ends by seeking first to serve the interests of the followers, rather than to first serve organizational goals. Servant leadership as defined by Greenleaf (1977) envisions a servant leader as a person who assumes the role of leader out of a desire to serve. Advancement of a shared vision is achieved by addressing the highest priority needs, empowering, and developing followers through a variety of mechanisms that will lead them to becoming servants as well. Much like Gilligan's (1982) ethic of caring, an advanced stage of moral development with a focus on others, servant leadership supports ethical behavior by promoting self-reflective, morally-centered leadership more than other leadership styles (Giampetro-Meyer, Brown, Browne, & Kubasek, 1998).

Greenleaf wrote his foundational essays (1970, 1972a, 1972b, cf. Greenleaf, 1977) after retiring from his thirty-eight year career as an AT&T manager in 1964. He summed up the raison d'être of servant leadership in his (1970) essay, The Servant as Leader — servant leadership manifests when a leader can answer affirmatively to the following: “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?” (p. 27). Greenleaf spent the remainder of his life promoting his unorthodox concept of servant leadership through lectures at various universities such as M.I.T., Harvard, and Dartmouth, and through his consulting work within the Ford Foundation, Lilly Endowment, R.K. Mellon Foundation, and the American Foundation for Management. He encouraged the adoption of servant leadership within organizations of every sort. In truth, servant leadership is not a new concept. It has been practiced across many cultures throughout history (cf. Covey, 1990; Nyabadza, 2003). Its underlying philosophy exists within the major religions and within the writings of many historical thought leaders (Ebener and O’Connell, 2010; Keith, 2008; Lanctot & Irving, 2007; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002; Winston, 2004).

Today, arguments in support of servant leadership as an appropriate means of meeting today’s complex organizational needs are being espoused by a growing number of researchers (Chin & Smith, 2006). For many scholars, however, the philosophy of putting the needs of followers first seemingly runs counter to any logical form of viable organizational leadership, expressing that it might even be detrimental, especially within for-profit and mission-driven institutions (Andersen, 2009).

While servant-led organizations have sometimes been described as “high performing organizations” (p. 604), the process by which they are high-performing remains virtually unexplored (Winston, 2004). In fact, as an overall theory, servant leadership has been described as lacking any sort of theoretical and empirical support (Andersen, 2009; Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Northouse, 1997). In their comparison of authentic leadership development theory with transformational, charismatic, spiritual, and servant leadership,
Avolio and Gardner (2005) argue that many of the foundational characteristics of servant leadership, such as leader awareness, empathy, and foresight, lack any grounding whatsoever within the psychological literature. They state that servant leadership completely lacks any theoretical foundation and is nearly bereft of empirical support. They also note that the mediating role of follower characteristics and organizational context are largely ignored within the literature. Since its origination, servant leadership as an organizational theory has made slow advances within the academic literature. Farling, Stone, and Winston (1999) called for empirical studies in 1999, yet one of the first empirical studies was published five years later by Ehrhart (2004). Since then, such empirical investigations have increased, albeit at an unhurried pace.

Much of the early servant leadership research was anecdotal (Bowman, 1997; Northouse, 1997; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). The popularity of servant leadership is largely derived from management and leadership authors publishing within the popular press who tout servant leadership as a form of leadership with positive outcomes for both organizations and employees, yet present scant evidence (DePree, 1989; Covey, 1990; Senge, 1990; Block, 1993; Wheatley, 2005). In addition, the Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership publishes numerous monographs in support of servant leadership (cf. Frick, 1995; Kelley, 1995; Rasmussen, 1995; Senge, 1995; Snodgrass, 1993; Spears, 1995, 1996). With scant empirical evidence offered by these popular press outlets, some people question whether it is simply a fad. From a theoretical development perspective, much can be learned from practitioners, but the nature of case studies and opinion are such that a knowledge gap separates them from theoretical development due to differences in contextualization and problematization (cf. Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006).

Despite the fact that an article concerning servant leadership appeared in the inaugural issue of Leadership Quarterly (Graham, 1991), there was little scholarly interest until the early 2000s. Today, a strong argument exists within the literature that servant leadership is conceptually distinct from other forms of leadership (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Ehrhart, 2004; Liden, Wayne, Zhao & Henderson, 2008; Parolini, Patterson & Winston, 2009). Increasing effort has been made by scholars in recent years to define servant leadership theoretically and to compare and contrast it, conceptually and empirically, with other forms of leadership (cf. Liden et al., 2008; Neubert, Kacmar, & Roberts, 2008; Parolini et al., 2009; Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Empirical support is just now beginning to catch up, yet many organizations move forward at full speed in terms of putting servant leadership into practice (Bass, 2008; Spears, 2005).

Despite existing for more than four and a half decades as a construct, servant leadership remains an ever elusive and under-developed phenomenon in the sense that it has yet to be packaged into a set of replicable best management practices (Brumback, 1999; Wong, Davey & Church, 2007). Greenleaf (1970, 1977) himself forewarned of this reductionism, stating that it is an unorthodox approach to leadership, which is less of a management technique and more of a way of life (Frick, 2004; Spears, 1995) to be contemplated, stating “it is meant to be neither a scholarly treatise nor a how-to-do-it manual” (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 49).
An Alternative to Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership (Bass, 1985) remains the most popular leadership topic in scholarly research, having more studies concerning it than all other leadership theories combined (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). However, researchers are increasingly realizing that transformational leadership may not be the only means of achieving organizational goals, while changing demands are challenging the traditional conceptualization of leadership. This can be seen in the development of alternative leadership theories, such as authentic, transcendent, spiritual, self-sacrificial, and ethical leadership (cf. Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Matteson & Irving, 2006; Yukl, Mahsud, Hassan & Prussia, 2013).

The egoistic nature of transformational leadership has been contrasted with the altruistic nature of servant leadership (Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004; Whittington, 2004). Scholars have described transformational leadership as a less morally robust form of leadership because of its focus on organizational objectives over service (Graham, 1991; Parolini et al., 2009; Whetstone, 2002). Stephens and colleagues (Stephens, D’Intino & Victor, 1995) argue that transformational leaders are more willing to violate ethical norms, thus overriding stakeholder interests in favor of organizational outcomes, whereas servant leaders will be more principle-centered (Covey, 1998) and will make organizational outcomes a lower priority than their own personal values and the needs of followers (Stone et al., 2004). Countervailing arguments by proponents of transformational leadership point toward an important role for ethics within transformational leadership. Transformational leadership has been described as resting on a foundation of ethical leadership originating from a leader’s values and vision, and a morally-grounded organizational culture (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Somewhat blurring the lines between servant leadership and transformational leadership as a process, though not in terms of end state, Kanungo (2001) asserts that transformational leaders utilize altruistic forms of empowerment to transform followers, shifting their self-interests toward the collective values, interests, and goals of the organization. However, Covey (2006) states that the principle-centered moral authority within servant leadership is not manipulative in achieving shared goals. Instead, it is respectful of follower’s freedom to choose their own course of actions, providing opportunities for making their voice heard and shaping the shared vision.

Similar to Avolio and Gardner (2005), Andersen (2009) presents a counter-argument to the appropriateness of servant leadership from a management perspective, suggesting the lack of empirical support concerning the positive impact of servant leadership on organizational outcomes makes it a questionable practice. He notes that attainment of organizational goals can be difficult or even impossible when followers’ goals become the main focus, thus making it an illogical form of organizational leadership.

Regardless of the debate as to the appropriateness of servant leadership as compared to transformational leadership, organizations are increasingly moving away from more traditional forms of hierarchical, top-down, and patriarchal leadership (Crippen, 2005; Magoni, 2003; Nwogu, 2004) in which employees serve their leaders (Sergiovanni, 2000). Today, the escalating focus on innovation, employee well-being and engagement,
accountability, social responsibility, ethical management, meeting the needs of all stakeholders, and Millennial needs has led to more employee-centric organizational climates. Management theorists are shifting away from framing the leader-follower relationship within an agency theory perspective, which conceptualizes the agents as opportunistic and self-serving, and therefore requiring greater monitoring by principals. This shift is toward self-actualizing, trustworthy, and team-serving leadership focused on making a difference (Davis, Schoorman, & Donaldson, 1997).

To wit, servant leadership has gained traction among the Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work for in America (Ruschman, 2002). It is increasingly being presented as an approach in meeting these modern organizational challenges because of its focus on the needs of followers (Patterson, 2003; Van Dierendonck, 2011). In fact, because servant leadership serves all stakeholders (Hamilton & Bean, 2005), many perceive it as especially appropriate given the growth of organizational complexity and increase in conflicting stakeholder demands (Pache & Santos, 2010, 2011).

**Conceptual Disunity and Research Opportunity**

The elephant of servant leadership, as we refer to it in the title, can be thought of through the lens of the obvious-yet-unspoken-of “elephant in the room.” Scholars avoid addressing the construct confusion and conceptual disunity that exist at the core of servant leadership as a theory. Little research effort has been undertaken to define the scope conditions (Suddaby, 2010) of the construct in terms of clarifying whether servant leadership is a full-range leadership process or a leadership style, a philosophy or a set of practices, a set of characteristics or a set of behaviors, and so forth. Parris and Peachey (2013) recently performed a systematic literature review of servant leadership more rigorous than most literature reviews. They examined 39 studies in an attempt to provide an empirical explanation for how servant leadership works. They noted that the literature consists primarily of conceptual work, especially in terms of characteristics (Spears, 1998; Laub, 1999; Patterson, 2003), measurement development (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005; Ehrhart, 2004; Liden et al., 2008; Page & Wong, 2000; Sendjaya, Sarros & Santora, 2008; Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011; Wong & Page, 2003), and theoretical framework development (Russell & Stone, 2002; Van Dierendonck, 2011), with very little continued direct exploration of prior theoretical development for the purposes of incremental advancement of theory. Parris and Peachey (2013) also reported that servant leadership is currently being investigated within many contexts and cultures and that servant leadership is a legitimate theory that can help followers develop, with results suggesting that characteristics of servant leadership vary in their importance depending upon the culture.

The “elephant” of servant leadership has a long memory, as illustrated by the fact that scholars and practitioners primarily return to the earliest works of Greenleaf (1970, 1972a, 1972b, 1977), Spears (1998), and Laub (1999) to serve as the basis for their own work. Despite a strong reliance upon these early theoretical efforts, scholars continue to present a wide range of conceptualizations that generate further conceptual confusion (Van Dierendonck, 2011). This expansive effort of conceptualization emphasizes the
“disciplined imagination” (Weick, 1989) of scholars working in the field; they have created, examined, and retained numerous conceptualizations of servant leadership. While the wide range of models, measures, and taxonomies of characteristics that exist provide insight, they’ve simultaneously muddled the field. Scholars continue to define and redefine servant leadership creating ever greater inconsistency. Clarity on what constitutes servant leadership has thus far rested with the personal opinions of researchers without any solid grounding in consensually established theory. In many respects, this is to be expected given that sensemaking is still taking place at the conceptual level. However, over forty years after the introduction of servant leadership, this lack of precision stymies advancement in many respects because scholars are speaking different languages, or – applying the parable most appropriate to the title – they are as “blind men” to the “elephant,” each one identifying some aspects of the phenomenon while ignoring others. One challenge is moving forward in research without presenting a specific position from a point of advocacy, thus continuing to allow for an inductive approach.

Parris and Peachey (2013) noted that most of the scholarly research has focused on construct development (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005; Ehrhart, 2004; Liden et al., 2008; Parolini et al., 2009; Sendjaya et al., 2008; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Despite that fact, that there remains no conceptual consensus in terms of a definition for servant leadership that clarifies what is and is not included specifically within the construct’s content domain. Unlike other forms of leadership, and underlying all conceptualizations of the leadership process within the field of servant leadership, is the underpinning of “leader as servant.” Many attempts have been made to define the characteristics of such leaders (Spears, 1998; Keith, 2008; Prosser, 2010). According to Larry Spears (1998), Greenleaf’s personal writings elucidated ten such mechanisms (listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and community building), though Spears acknowledged that other servant leadership characteristics and mechanisms exist.

A review of the literature by Russell and Stone (2002) suggested that there were nine functional attributes. These distinctive characteristics of servant leaders include: vision, honesty, integrity, trust, service, modeling, pioneering, appreciation of others, and empowerment (cf. Covey, 1996; Greenleaf, 1977; Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Laub, 1999, 2003; Pollard, 1996; Spears, 1998). They, in turn, are supported by eleven accompanying attributes: communication, credibility, competence, stewardship, visibility, influence, persuasion, listening, encouragement, teaching, and delegation. These outcomes will also be influenced by a variety of pre-existing organizational characteristics including organizational values, culture, practices, and politics, as well as employee attitudes (Russell & Stone, 2002). However, in turn, these attributes will likewise influence the organization. In particular, the influence of servant leadership on culture will facilitate positive work attitudes and behaviors that lead to performance.

Additional scholars have continued to redefine the characteristics of servant leadership. For instance, Washington, Sutton, and Feild (2006) highlight the values of empathy, integrity, and competence, while work by Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) provides
an integrated servant leadership model consisting of five factors: altruistic calling, emotional healing, persuasive mapping, wisdom, and organizational stewardship. Van Dierendonck (2011) later identified six key characteristics: empowering and developing people, humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, providing direction, and stewardship.

A wide range of assessment instruments have been developed and utilized based on various sets of characteristics associated with servant leadership (i.e., Liden et al., 2008; Peterson, Galvin & Lange, 2012; Reed, Vidaver-Cohen, & Colwell, 2011; Schaubroeck et al., 2012; Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Out of the twenty seven empirical survey-based studies Parris and Peachey (2013) examined, fourteen different instruments were used to measure servant leadership, highlighting the problem of multiple definitions and construct confusion. While there are many instruments in use, many of which lack psychometric examination, there are no broadly accepted measures of servant leadership thereby resulting in theoretical disunity (Andersen, 2009; Parris & Peachey, 2013).

This confusion remains an issue, making it unclear as to the specific domain content within the construct, and virtually impossible to objectively categorize leaders as servant leaders. The construct confusion also leaves any research open to criticism due to the lack of an agreed upon taxonomy of characteristics (Parris & Peachey, 2013). Unlike the “well-tilled soil” of many areas of organizational research, the resulting disunity within the servant leadership field provides the opportunity for scholars to develop the types of highly original and useful research that Corley and Gioia (2011) identified. Continuing the conversation by means of incremental yet important furtherance of our understanding will be invaluable, especially given the need to bring a sense of continuity and order within the field.

Potential Solutions

First, we contend that conceptual disunity and construct confusion should continue to be addressed and rectified through both qualitative and quantitative approaches. By means of a qualitative approach, meaningfulness by way of grounded theory building may enhance conceptualization of servant leadership, providing construct clarity in the forms of a better definition and coherency. Continued emphasis on empirical data will ground theory-building efforts in evidence, providing a better understanding of scope boundaries and relationships between servant leadership and other constructs. Together, both forms of research will provide legitimacy and enhance the value of servant leadership by shifting it away from the limiting boundaries of a philosophy toward a learnable and teachable set of practices that can be further developed by means of open source organizational learning as a means of structured and broader-reaching contemplation.

Second, we posit that a multilevel process approach to servant leadership theory building would enhance the value of servant leadership by examining the phenomenon as an organizational process. Theories of leadership explain complex organizational processes, provide the basis for identifying contingencies, and help identify potential outcomes of the phenomenon (Bass, 2008). A few studies have examined servant
leadership in relation to other organizational processes. These studies include investigations of servant leadership in relation to organizational change (Hamilton & Bean, 2005), leadership development (Savage-Austin & Honeycutt, 2011), and succession planning (Dingman & Stone, 2007). By means of continued multilevel modeling and examination of complexities, the servant leadership process could be explored at all organizational levels both qualitatively and quantitatively, which could potentially improve servant leadership as a distinct and practically useful theory.

Multilevel Models of Servant Leadership

More empirical research of servant leadership is needed at multiple levels of analysis in order to increase construct clarity. This type of research could help provide construct scope through evidence concerning the homologous validity and applicability (cf. Kozlowski & Klein, 2000; Morgeson & Hofmann, 1999; Rousseau, 1985) of variables at different levels of analysis and it would also provide greater understanding of the relationship servant leadership has with other constructs. Empirical research into servant leadership took off in the early 2000s, but our understanding of servant leadership as an organizational phenomenon across multiple organizational levels remains in its nascency (Hunter, Neubert, Perry, Witt, Penney & Weinberger, 2013). There is a need for research on servant leadership from multiple stakeholder perspectives (Van Dierendonck, 2011) and at different levels of analysis. Multilevel theoretical models that examine multilevel outcomes from a multi-stakeholder perspective are necessary for advancing our understanding of leadership as a process within a larger system (cf. Hunter et al., 2013; Liden et al., 2008; Yammarino & Bass, 1991). There are many potential individual, group, and organizational level characteristics that could be further examined using a multilevel analysis. This is illustrated by the contribution of multilevel models within transformational leadership theory, which have provided insight into the individual level process of transformational leadership in relation to social level constructs such as climate and culture (cf. Liao & Chuang, 2007; Wallace, Butts, Johnson, Stevens, & Smith, 2013; Wang & Howell, 2012).

A variety of servant leadership models have also been offered by various scholars such as Farling and colleagues (1999), Laub (1998), Page and Wong (2000), Sendjaya and Sarros (2002), and Wong (2003). Over time, theoretical development has led to more multilevel and process-oriented models, such as Liden et al., (2008), Liden, Panaccio, Meuser, Hu, and Wayne (2014), Patterson (2003), and Winston (2003, 2004).

Van Dierendonck (2011) presented a highly useful multilevel model that illustrates the underlying process of servant leadership based on theory and empirical evidence from the servant leadership literature and related fields that highlighted the servant leader’s motivation to both lead and serve. The model includes antecedents and outcomes of servant leadership. Servant leadership impacts the leader-follower relationship and the general organizational climate, which affects followers’ self-actualization, positive job attitudes and increased performance, the effectiveness of teams, and sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) at the organizational level. The model also notes
reciprocation by followers as a feedback loop, enforcing the positive influence of servant leaders.

In the following sections, we briefly summarize the current development of servant leadership as a construct at the different levels of analysis.

**Overview of Servant Leadership at the Individual Level**

Both leader and follower characteristics could be examined at the individual level. Most of the research has primarily focused on servant leaders. While no demographic differences were identified within one study (Taylor, Martin, Hutchinson & Jinks, 2007), two other studies noted differences in servant leaders based on gender (Fridell, Newcome Belcher & Messner, 2009) and socio-economics (McCuddy & Cavin, 2009). Barrick, Mitchell, & Stewart (2003) have examined the influence of personality, particularly the Big Five, on follower motivation, behaviors, and attitudes through the lens of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977). Recent studies of personality, for instance, suggest that agreeableness is positively related to servant leadership (Hunter et al., 2013; Washington et al., 2006) while extraversion (Hunter et al., 2013) and narcissism (Peterson et al., 2012) are negatively related to it (Hunter et al., 2013).

Leadership is shaped and defined by personal philosophy (Ehigie & Akpan, 2004; Mullins, 1996). The values of servant leaders have been greatly examined within the literature. Values are underlying “prescriptive, enduring standards” (Rokeach, 1973). Values influence the ways in which people process information and interpret situations; accept and reject goals; develop and maintain interpersonal relationships; guide for decision-making and problem-solving; and ultimately determine leadership performance and organizational success (England & Lee, 1974; Russell, 2001; Washington et al., 2006). Therefore, furthering our understanding of values within the process of servant leadership is crucial. Graham (1991) argued that servant leadership is morally grounded and inspirational, fitting with Covey’s conceptualization of “principle-centered leadership” (1990). Many servant leadership scholars contend that the attributes of servant leadership originate from the core beliefs and personal values of leaders (cf. Covey, 1990; Russell, 2001; Russell & Stone, 2002). Values are made manifest in attitudes and behaviors that form the essence of servant leadership (DePree, 1992; Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Schein, 2010).

Motivation to lead has been identified as a major influence on leadership processes (Kark & Van Dijk, 2007). Servant leaders are presumed to lead out of their desire to serve (Covey, 1990; Greenleaf, 1977; Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Russell & Stone, 2002; Turner, 2000). According to Greenleaf (1970), servant leadership “begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first” (p. 27). Further examination of motivation to lead in relation to servant leader values, personality, and other individual differences can improve our definition of a servant leader.

Researchers have found empirical support for positive relationships with several work attitudes including job satisfaction (cf. Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Hebert, 2003; Jenkins & Stewart, 2008, 2010; West, Bocarnea, & Maranon, 2009), supervisor
satisfaction (Sun & Wang, 2009), need satisfaction (Mayer, Bardes, & Piccolo, 2008), perceived organizational support (Sun & Wang, 2009; West et al., 2009), organizational commitment (cf. Jaramillo, Grisaffe, Chonko, & Roberts, 2009a; West & Bocarnea, 2008; West et al., 2009), person–organization fit (Jaramillo et al., 2009a), role clarity (West et al., 2009), empowerment (Earnhardt, 2008; Horsman, 2001), leader and organizational trust (Joseph & Winston, 2005; Reinke, 2003), and engagement (Walumbwa, Wang, Wang, Schaubroeck, & Avolio, 2010). Servant leadership has been shown to be negatively related to disengagement (Hunter et al., 2013), turnover intention (cf. Babakus, Yavas & Ashill, 2011; Hunter et al., 2013), and job stress (Jaramillo et al., 2009a). Many of these findings align with similar findings within meta-analyses of high LMX relationships (Gerstner & Day, 1997), trust in leadership (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002) and behavioral integrity of leaders (Davis & Rothstein, 2006).

A variety of positive relationships between servant leadership and performance related outcomes have also been identified, including employee performance (Liden et al., 2008; Neubert et al., 2008), sales behavior, customer orientation and related extra role performance (Hunter et al., 2013; Jaramillo, Grisaffe, Chonko, & Roberts, 2009b), extra effort (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006), leadership effectiveness (cf. Hu & Liden, 2011; Irving & Longbotham, 2007), goal and process clarity (Hu & Liden, 2011), helping behavior (Babakus et al., 2011; Hunter et al., 2013; Neubert et al., 2008), innovative and creative behavior (Neubert et al., 2008; Panaccio, Henderson, Liden, Wayne, & Cao, 2014), deviant behavior (Neubert et al., 2008), and organizational citizenship behaviors (Ehrhart, 2004; Ng, Koh & Goh, 2008).

**Overview of Servant Leadership at the Dyadic Level**

The high quality LMX (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975; Liden & Maslyn, 1998) relationships that are expected to exist between servant leaders and their followers rest upon the leaders’ personal values (Russell, 2001) and their desire to serve (Ng et al., 2008). Leaders that demonstrate humility help create a work environment in which followers perceive greater safety and trust, and reciprocate in trust (Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010). The result is that followers will voluntarily follow, while the leader creates the right balance between autonomy and direction (Van Dierendonck, 2011). Servant leaders often engender high levels of trust (Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010), thus creating a context in which followers feel comfortable mimicking their leaders’ behaviors (Brown, Trevino, & Harrison, 2005; Graham, 1991). Servant leaders provide followers with hope and help sustain organizational virtuousness through positive micro-behaviors and macro-behaviors (Searle & Barbuto, 2010).

Servant leadership is rooted in interpersonal trust (cf. Reinke, 2003; Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010). Servant leadership helps awaken, engage, and develop followers by means of leader humility, authenticity, and interpersonal acceptance. Servant leaders demonstrate a fundamental appreciation of others by respecting, encouraging, and empowering those they serve, by inspiring them with courage, hope, workplace spirituality (Herman, 2010), and feelings of psychological safety (Russell, 2001), thereby nurturing a positive climate (Black, 2010; Jaramillo et al., 2009a; Neubert et al., 2008).
Overview of Servant Leadership at the Group and Organizational Levels

Culture and climate are two organizational phenomena that have been studied at both the group and organizational levels (Glick, 1988; Patterson, Payne, & West, 1996; Zohar, 2000). Organizational climate is the shared perception of policies, practices, and procedures (cf. Ostroff, Kinicki & Tamkins, 2003; Patterson, West, Shackleton, Dawson, Lawthron, Maitlis, & Wallace, 2005; Schneider & Reichers, 1983), whereas culture consists of the shared underlying assumptions, values, and beliefs that define the nature of the organization. New organizational members are socialized into the proper way to think, feel, and behave based on these assumptions, values, and beliefs (Schein, 2010; Trice & Beyer, 1993; Zohar & Hofmann, 2012).

Employees’ psychological climate (James & Jones, 1974), consisting of their perceptions of the work environment, are in aggregate referred to as organizational climate (Patterson et al., 2005; Rousseau, 1988). Through the social exchange process of reciprocation at the dyadic level (Blau, 1964), followers increasingly adopt a servant leadership mindset. Collectively, this process will generate and sustain an organizational climate in which followers feel safe using their own knowledge in making decisions without fear should they fail, thus allowing for continuous development and learning (McGee-Cooper & Looper, 2001). Servant leadership is related to procedural justice (cf. Ehrhart, 2004; Joseph & Winston, 2005; Reinke, 2004; Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010). It creates a sense of fairness through its sensitivity to follower needs, focus on their growth and well-being, and ethical orientation (Mayer et al., 2008). Delegation, empowerment, and participatory leadership are also essential parts of a servant leadership climate (Neuschel, 1998). Servant leadership builds community and a safe organizational climate through its emphasis on trust, fairness, and simultaneous focus on the goals of the organization, societal good, and the needs of employees (McGee-Cooper & Looper, 2001).

Within servant leader-follower relationships, followers reciprocate their leaders’ support, thus creating a virtuous cycle of influence that affects leadership, organizational climate, follower attitudes, and performance (Russell & Stone, 2002; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Hunter and colleagues (2013) present a cycle of service model that suggests servant leaders create the conditions within a service climate (cf. Schneider, Salvaggio, & Subirats, 2002) that induce followers to engage personally in servant leadership, resulting in discretionary helping behaviors in the form of work assistance and encouragement. This aligns with prior research that suggests service climate is positively related to helping behaviors (Schneider, Ehrhart, Mayer, Saltz, & Niles-Jolly, 2005).

Leadership and organizational culture have been described as linked phenomena that can only be understood in combination with one another (Schein, 2010). The values of an organization’s leaders are embedded within all levels of the organization and form the basis for the organizational cultures (Ford, Wilderom, & Caparella, 2008; Kilcourse, 1994; Schein, 2010). “Shared values give everyone an internal compass that enables them to act independently and interdependently, responsibly and publicly” (Kouzes & Posner,
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1995, p. 53). Schein (2010) noted that once an organizational culture is in place, the organizational values will serve as a selection tool in identifying leaders who fit within the culture. Culture also influences leadership behaviors, shaping perceptions and decisions (Jaskyte, 2010; Walter & Bruch, 2009). This does not preclude organizations that do not practice servant leadership from changing, since new challenges provide opportunities for cultural development and the establishment of new or different values (Schein, 2010). The learning experiences of organizational members and the assumptions, beliefs, and values of new members cause cultures to change. Leaders reinforce culture through a variety of embedding mechanisms that communicate both explicitly and implicitly their personal assumptions, beliefs, and values.

Servant leaders develop cultures in which followers become servant leaders (Melchar & Bosco, 2010). Servant leadership culture has been found to be related to customer service, creativity, organizational identification, employee and organizational performance, and intention to remain with the organization (Liden, Wayne, Liao, & Meuser, 2014). Organizational culture is also the mechanism by which servant leadership impacts trust (Giampetro-Meyer et al., 1998). The dimensions of humane orientation and power distance, examined within the GLOBE study of leadership (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004) have been identified in an effort to understand the influence of culture on servant leadership (Van Dierendonck, 2011). Smith, Montagno, and Kuzmenko (2004) contend that servant leadership and transformational leadership lead to the development of very different organizational cultures. They speculate that transformational leadership will lead to a proactive, empowered, innovative, and dynamic culture that will be more successful in a dynamic environment, whereas servant leadership will lead to a spiritual, nurturing, and safe culture that would be more suitable for a static environment.

Servant leadership has been linked with group and organizational performance (cf. Ehrhart, 2004; Hu & Liden, 2011) and with team collaboration and effectiveness (cf. Irving & Longbotham, 2007; Mayer et al., 2008; Taylor et al., 2007). Fitting with the research on humility by Morris, Brotheridge, and Urbanski (2005) and Nielsen, Marrone, & Slay (2010), CEOs practicing servant leadership and lacking narcissism were found to be effective organizational leaders in terms of firm performance measured as return on assets (Peterson, Galvin, & Lange, 2012). In addition, at the organizational level, charismatic and transformational leadership have been found to fall short of producing sufficient corporate social responsibility (CSR; Waldman, Siegel, and Javidan, 2006). Whereas, servant leadership influences CSR and sustainability through involvement in the community and creating positive stakeholder relationships (Burlingham, 2005).

Visualizing the Entire Elephant

Understanding that references are not theory (Sutton & Staw, 1995), we offer the previous sections not to advance theory, but to summarize the current state of research in servant leadership at different levels of analysis. This review is certainly not comprehensive, but it highlights advancements that have been made. Dinh, Lord, Gardner, Meuser, Liden, & Hu (2014) recently reported a total of 60 articles at the
individual level, 10 articles at the dyadic level, 20 articles at the group level, and 10 articles at the organizational level have been published within ten top tier journals from January 2000 to September 2012. Despite this fact, servant leadership was low ranked among the various leadership theories published. Nevertheless, the advances in servant leadership research at different levels of analysis over the past ten years have been very promising.

As theoretical development continues to advance, our understanding of servant leadership will provide us with additional opportunities to join in the conversation together in hopes of reaching conceptual consensus. While empirical research at this stage continues to operate at the level of the blind man, or at least the poorly-sighted man, over time, the image of the entire elephant will be filled in and we will be able to recognize servant leadership as a multilevel, holistic process, thereby increasing our understanding of servant leadership’s scope and relationship with other constructs. Servant leadership theory will thereby benefit from the resulting coherency. We encourage you to join us in bringing together the full picture so that we can achieve construct clarity and get to know the elephant in the room, because it appears to be both a real and a friendly elephant.
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Implementing Servant Leadership at Cleveland Clinic: A Case Study in Organizational Change

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Abstract

In 2008, Cleveland Clinic—one of the world’s premier healthcare institutions—launched an organizational development process with the interrelated goals of significantly increasing employee engagement and improving the overall patient experience. Critical to the success of this process has been “hardwiring” the concept of Servant Leadership into the culture. Supporting elements in the process have included enterprise-wide initiatives focused on the concept of “We are all caregivers”—caregiver wellness, and caregiver recognition. Results have included dramatic improvements in both engagement, as measured by the Gallup Q12 survey, and patient satisfaction, as measured by the federal “HCAHPS” survey (Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers Systems).

Keywords: Servant Leadership, Serving Leadership, Cleveland Clinic, Employee Engagement, Healthcare

Renowned for its many clinical “firsts,” effective management practices, and innovative use of technology, Cleveland Clinic is perennially ranked among the nation’s best healthcare providers. In 2013, for example, the annual U.S. News & World Report survey of U.S. hospitals ranked Cleveland Clinic #4 overall; 15 of its specialties were rated among the nation’s best, including cardiac care, which was rated #1 for the 19th consecutive year.
Cleveland Clinic is a large, complex healthcare delivery system. Its locations include the 167-acre, 44-building main campus in Cleveland; eight regional hospitals; 16 family health and ambulatory surgery centers; and facilities in Florida, Nevada, Canada, and Abu Dhabi. The Clinic has over 44,000 employees, including 3100 physicians and scientists, and 11,000 nurses.

But in early 2008, despite its well-deserved reputation for excellence, the Clinic faced an array of challenges, including an increasingly strong sense that its overall patient experience was not on par with its clinical results. In the words of the CEO, Dr. Delos Cosgrove, “Patients were coming to us for the clinical excellence, but they did not like us very much.” In March 2008, the first publicly reported results of the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers Systems (HCAHPS) attached hard numbers to this concern.

HCAHPS is the first national, standardized, publicly reported survey of patients’ perceptions of hospital care. Developed by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), two agencies in the federal Department of Health and Human Services, the HCAHPS survey instrument was approved for use in 2005. Public reporting of the results began in 2008.

The HCAHPS survey asks discharged patients 27 questions about their recent hospital stay. For each participating hospital, ten composite measures are publicly reported. When those first HCAHPS results were published (and widely publicized in the local media), the Clinic’s rating was just average overall, and well below average in virtually every individual measure of the patient experience, from staff responsiveness and the communication skills of physicians and nurses to room cleanliness and noise levels during the night. “Below average” performance in any domain is anathema at a premier institution like Cleveland Clinic. Add to that the fact that beginning in 2012, HCAHPS scores would affect a hospital’s Medicare reimbursement levels, and it is no surprise that the Clinic’s leadership team viewed these results as unacceptable.

**Employee Engagement at Cleveland Clinic**

In the fourth quarter of 2007, the Clinic had conducted a search for a new Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO). During the interview process, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and other members of the senior leadership team had indicated to the eventual appointee that the Clinic’s organizational culture might need to change. Upon coming aboard in December, the new CHRO conducted an informal “walking around” assessment, speaking with senior leaders, middle managers, unit supervisors, and staff in a wide variety of clinical, business, technical, and support roles across the enterprise. These conversations suggested that significant numbers of people at the Clinic felt unappreciated and undervalued. The question was how widespread such feelings might be, and how they might be affecting the Clinic’s overall performance, including the quality of its patient experience.

To provide some answers, Gallup was commissioned to conduct an enterprise-wide employee engagement survey. Employee engagement can be defined as: “…a heightened emotional and intellectual connection that an employee has for his/her job, organization,
manager, or co-workers that, in turn, influences him/her to apply additional discretionary effort to his/her work” (Gibbons, 2006).

With regard to its relationship to organizational performance, engagement has been shown to correlate positively with such diverse metrics as customer loyalty, profitability, productivity, turnover, safety incidents, shrinkage, absenteeism, and quality. In studies of engagement in hospital settings, Gallup has found that higher engagement correlates with fewer malpractice claims and patient safety incidents (Harter, Schmidt, Killham, & Agrawal, 2013). And specifically with respect to patient satisfaction, a Gallup study of 94 hospitals found that “hospitals with higher levels of engagement also register higher HCAHPS domain performance” (Gallup, 2003).

The literature on the concept of a service profit chain, developed in the 1990s by researchers at Harvard Business School, also points to the connection between employee engagement, customer satisfaction, and a service-based organization’s performance (Heskett, Jones, Loverman, Sasser, & Schlesinger, 1994). For example, a 2005 study of the service profit chain model in the U.K. retail banking sector notes that there is “…ample evidence to suggest that favourable employee experiences, as reflected by attitudes such as satisfaction and commitment, and by positive evaluations of organizational climate, are associated with elevated levels of customer satisfaction” (Gelade & Young, 2005).

In short, the HCAHPS results made it clear that the Clinic had a patient satisfaction problem, and employee engagement has been shown to correlate directly with patient satisfaction. So where did the Clinic stand with regard to engagement?

The results of the Gallup survey were not encouraging. As measured by Gallup’s proprietary Q12 instrument, the Clinic ranked only in the 44th percentile in employee engagement when compared to other hospital systems. Perhaps even more telling were the findings with regard to the ratio of engaged to disengaged employees. According to Gallup, which has researched engagement in organizations across the world for more than three decades, in “world class” organizations, the ratio of engaged to actively disengaged employees is 9.5:1 (Gallup, 2012). In the 2008 survey, the Clinic’s ratio of engaged to actively disengaged employees was only 2.57:1—far from world class.

The Clinic’s New People Strategy

In the spring of 2008, with these disappointing HCAHPS and Gallup survey results in hand, the Clinic’s executive leadership team approved a new “people strategy” designed to make the Clinic a “great place to work and grow,” increase engagement, and ultimately improve the patient experience. The strategy was based on a set of high level assumptions about what it takes for employees to become highly engaged—what it takes for them to make that emotional connection with their work that leads to extra effort and ultimately to higher performance. These assumptions were that employees need to feel (1) that their leaders care about them and treat them with respect; (2) that the organization has an important mission, and that the employee’s work is directly connected to that mission; and (3) that the organization offers opportunities for personal and professional development.
These assumptions and the initiatives they have generated at Cleveland Clinic since 2008 are in keeping with the literature on employee engagement and its key drivers. For example, a Towers Perrin (now Towers Watson) study listed these contributors to high engagement: “…senior management’s interest in employees’ well-being; challenging work; decision-making authority; company focused on customers; career advancement opportunities; …collaborative work environment; resources to get the job done; input on decision making; and a clear vision from senior management about future success” (Towers Perrin, 2003, p. 1).

A U.K. government review of engagement research and case studies of companies in both the U.S. and U.K. indicated that managers whose organizations demonstrate high levels of engagement provide: “…clarity for what is expected from individual staff, which involves some stretch, and much appreciation and feedback/coaching and training. The second key area is treating their people as individuals, with fairness and respect and concern for the employee’s well-being” (MacLeod & Clarke, 2009).

Clearly then, an organization’s leaders play a critical role in creating what might be called a “culture of engagement.” For senior leaders, this role is manifest primarily in the decisions they make, the policies they approve, and the programs they fund. For managers and supervisors, the role is more direct, in terms of how they actually speak to and behave towards individual employees on a day to day basis.

**Servant Leadership at Cleveland Clinic: Introducing the Concept**

As indicated above, the Clinic’s new people strategy was designed to address several of the key drivers of engagement, as illustrated in Figure 1, and each of the components of this strategy would prove to be critical to improving engagement. But given the critical relationship between leadership and engagement, one of the most important of the Clinic’s engagement initiatives has arguably been the on-going effort to implement the concept of Servant Leadership.

**Figure 1. Key Drivers of Employee Engagement.**
Not atypically for a large, complex organization, Cleveland Clinic is hierarchically structured, and in 2008 the default leadership model tended to be top down, command and control. In and of itself, command and control leadership need not imply that leaders do not value, respect, or listen to those who report to them. Nor does command and control leadership necessarily produce low levels of engagement. Perhaps the best example is the military, where leadership is typically command and control but engagement—that emotional connection to the group and the mission—is often extremely high.

That said, the Gallup survey results certainly seemed to indicate that at Cleveland Clinic in 2008, the existing leadership model was part of the engagement problem. The Gallup Q12 asks employees to rate their organizations on a 5-point scale from 0/strongly disagree to 5/strongly agree. In 2008, Clinic employees gave by far their lowest rating to “I have a best friend at work.” Gallup ties this item directly to leadership style, noting:

“The best managers do not subscribe to the idea that there should be no close friendships at work; instead, they free people to get to know one another, which is a basic human need. This, then, can influence communication, trust, and other outcomes” (Harter et al., 2013).

After “best friend,” the following items—all clearly related to how leaders behave and how employees perceive this behavior—received the next lowest scores on the Clinic’s 2008 engagement survey:

- In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.
- At work my opinions seem to count.
- There is someone at work who encourages my development.

With all this in mind, the Clinic turned to the concept of servant leadership. Powerfully articulated more than four decades ago by management consultant Robert Greenleaf, servant leadership emphasizes the leader’s role in “making sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served.” According to Greenleaf, a leader’s effectiveness can at least in part be measured by whether the members of the organization “become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants” (Greenleaf, 2008, 27). Some 30 years after Greenleaf’s groundbreaking work on the concept, Larry Spears listed these ten characteristics of a servant leader: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community (Spears, 2010).

Over the years, servant leadership principles have been applied in organizations ranging from Southwest Airlines, Marriott, Kaiser Permanente, and Starbucks to the U.S. Army, Air Force, and Marines (Sloan, 2009; Modern Servant Leader, 2015). Nonetheless, the idea of shifting the Clinic’s leadership model in this direction was in many ways a daunting one. Cleveland Clinic has always been a “physician-run organization” and its leadership team was clearly committed to maintaining the Clinic’s core clinical culture—a culture focused first and foremost on clinical excellence and a way of “doing things around here” perceived as leading to the best possible clinical
results. Thus, while some change might be acceptable, any change that could be construed as weakening this clinical focus would be resisted and rejected.

Recognizing the need for some shift in the Clinic’s operating culture, the CEO was prepared to approach the idea of servant leadership with an open mind. Noting, however, that the Clinic’s leaders could be resistant to mandated change, he advised the CHRO to conduct a soft launch, gradually introducing and “socializing” the idea with individuals and small groups of leaders.

Thus, the initial phase of implementing servant leadership at Cleveland Clinic began with presentations to key members of the executive leadership team in the spring of 2008. As expected, the response was not universally supportive. The then Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) had serious reservations, and the then Chief Operating Officer (COO) was explicit in his feeling that servant leadership “…will never work here,” adding “I’m not going to let you [the CHRO] take 40,000 people down this path.”

By early summer, however, the groundwork had been laid, and the servant leadership concept was presented before the entire executive leadership team. The discussion was lively, but by the end of the meeting the CEO had expressed his personal support and approval to move forward was obtained.

In the next few months, the servant leader concept was introduced across the enterprise via a series of informal meetings with small groups of leaders. In response, some physicians pointed out that they had been trained to “take charge” and make difficult decisions, that their ability and willingness to do so were critical to outstanding patient care, and that this deeply ingrained training made it natural for them to assume a command and control leadership style. In the words of one surgeon: “Hey, in my OR (Operation Room), I’m in charge. Period. That’s the way it has to be, and that’s the way it is. And now you expect me to also be a servant leader? Come on.”

By and large, however, the reaction to the concept in these initial meetings was generally positive, evoking comments such as “This is a good thing for us to do” and “This idea of serving others is precisely why I went into medicine.” As a result, by the fall of 2008, it seemed time to move ahead with implementation.

Implementing the Concept: Building Awareness

In the fall of 2008, an external consultancy—Pittsburgh-based Third Rivers Partners—was retained to assist with implementation. Ken Jennings, the founder of Third Rivers, has infused the servant leader concept with new ideas and language, while creating a set of tools designed to help organizations put the concept into practice. Jennings, for example, speaks not of “servant” leadership, but “serving” leadership—a shift to more active language that may help the take-command type of leader feel more comfortable with the broader concept. (In the following pages, SL refers to serving leadership).

According to Jennings, the serving leader:

- Upends the pyramid—supporting and serving others in the organization, rather than issuing commands from the top down.
• Builds on strengths—recognizing and leveraging the strengths of others.
• Raises the bar—confirming a commitment to greater goals and empowering others to succeed in reaching them.
• Blazes the trail—teaching and coaching others, enabling them to go beyond their past limits.
• Runs to great purpose—creating a compelling vision that engages others in striving to achieve it. (Jennings & Stahl-Wert, 2003).

Using the Third Rivers model and tools, the first stage of implementation was designed to build awareness of SL across the leaders of all units and functions within the Cleveland Clinic system. The activities in this phase included serving leader-focused coaching of the Clinic’s executive leadership team—which includes the 30+ leaders of all key business and clinical functions—and the broader Strategic Council, consisting of some 65 clinical and non-clinical executives. In early 2009, the next leadership tier, consisting of 400+ Directors, participated in a one-day serving leader initiation program. SL principles were also introduced into the mentoring program for physicians.

**Developing Serving Leader Skills**

Since 2009, the Clinic has implemented an array of initiatives designed to ensure that serving leader principles are embedded throughout the culture, and that leaders at every level obtain the skills necessary to be effective serving leaders. These initiatives include developing:

• **Serving Leader competencies**, appropriate to each leadership level, from supervisor to senior executive; these competency families include: Leading through Mission & Values; Performance Management; Empowerment & Delegation; Building Healthcare Talent; and Building Work Relationships.

The SL competencies have been embedded into the curriculum and specific courses offered as part of the Clinic’s new leadership development strategy.

• **Serving Leader training**, for supervisors and managers; first piloted in several of the Clinic’s institutes and one of its regional hospitals, this program has since been implemented enterprise-wide.

• **Cohorts of Serving Leader Advisors**, tasked with being champions of SL and providing SL coaching/support in their own units; more than 100 SL Advisors have participated in the 8-day development program, and received on-going SL coaching from Third Rivers staff.

• **SL in a Box** and the **SL Toolkit**, resources designed to assist leaders in integrating SL into the everyday working environment of their units.

• **SL metrics**, embedded into the Clinic’s performance management system for leaders at all levels.

• A **SL Community of Practice**, consisting of leaders from across the Clinic who are involved with projects using SL principles. The group meets on a quarterly basis to discuss SL, compare project results, and share best practices.

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Executive Rounding, jointly initiated by the Office of Patient Experience and Human Resources, deploys the Clinic’s top 200 leaders in small groups on quarterly “rounds” throughout the system. The purpose is to recognize caregivers at the unit level, and most importantly, to listen deeply to both caregivers and patients.

SL and Other Engagement Initiatives

It should not be forgotten that Cleveland Clinic’s drive to implement SL was motivated by the goal of increasing employee engagement and ultimately improving patient satisfaction. In other words, SL was not necessarily seen as a good in and of itself. Given this, it is worth commenting on the relationship between SL and other engagement-focused initiatives at the Clinic.

We Are All Caregivers: Recognizing the Contribution of All Employees

In 2008, at the same time that the concept of SL was being introduced, a “Cultural Development Work Group” that included the CHRO, Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Chief Patient Experience Officer (CPEO), Executive Director for Continuous Improvement (EDCI), and other senior leaders met to discuss the issue of cultural change at the Clinic. What emerged from these discussions was a simple but powerful idea: “We are all caregivers… working together to ensure the wellbeing of our patients…and each of us plays a valuable role in fulfilling that mission.”

This idea flowed directly from the realization that patient satisfaction—as defined, for example, in the HCAHPS survey—was based on the total patient experience, and not simply the patient’s clinical results. If factors such as the cleanliness and quietness of the patient’s room, and the quality of discharge information could shape the patient experience, then all Clinic employees—including not just doctors and nurses but also the people working in Facilities or Accounting, Transport or Food Services—played a role in whether that experience was positive or negative. In that sense, they could and should be considered “caregivers.”

Not surprisingly, this idea that “we are all caregivers” encountered at least initial resistance from some members of the clinical staff—and here again, as with the concept of SL, the explicit support of clinical leaders such as the CEO and the CMO was critical to building gradual acceptance. Ultimately, to embed the idea into the broader culture, the term “employee” was changed to “caregiver” on internal and external communications materials, from the website to identification badges. Senior leaders wove the idea into their regular presentations to Clinic audiences. By 2010, the idea was sufficiently well established that the Clinic’s Annual Report for that year was titled “We Are All Caregivers.”

To reinforce the “we are all caregivers” concept, the Clinic launched the Cleveland Clinic Experience initiative. Over a six month period in 2010-2011, all 43,000+ caregivers at the Clinic participated in this program focused on how to respond with greater empathy to both colleagues and patients. Working in groups of 8-10, individuals from different levels and functions—executives, managers, physicians, nurses, and non-clinical staff from every department—came together to learn how to respond to colleagues and patients with “HEART.” This acronym stands for the ability to listen

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closely and really hear the other person, empathize with the other person’s situation, apologize when something has gone wrong, respond appropriately and with respect to the other person’s concerns, and, finally, to say thank you and really mean it.

Since 2011, every new hire at the Clinic has gone through this same program, and line managers have received follow-up training in how to support and sustain the HEART skill set in their own units. As with the “we are all caregivers” initiative, the Cleveland Clinic Experience program has reinforced and been reinforced by the principles of SL.

**Rewarding Caregiver Behavior**

SL at the Clinic is closely tied to another key engagement initiative, the Caregiver Celebrations program. As the name implies, Caregiver Celebrations, which was launched in 2010, provides a consistent way for managers, peers, and patients to recognize caregivers who manifest the Clinic’s core values. Awards range from simple thank you notes and certificates of recognition to cash awards ranging from $10 to $2000. An annual award of $10,000 is presented by the CEO to one individual caregiver and one team.

The Caregiver Celebrations program has been highly successful, as measured by its high rates of utilization, by positive anecdotal feedback from both managers and caregivers, and as discussed below, by data from the Clinic’s annual engagement survey.

**SL and the Other Engagement Initiatives**

Individually and together, the We Are All Caregivers, Cleveland Clinic Experience, and Caregiver Celebrations initiatives have served to reinforce the core SL principles of recognizing and building on the strengths of every member of the organization to achieve a greater good. That goal was to make Cleveland Clinic a great place to work and grow, thereby achieving a significantly higher level of employee/caregiver engagement and ultimately delivering a more satisfactory overall patient experience. Have these results been achieved?

**RESULTS**

To assess the success of Cleveland Clinic’s serving leader initiative, two questions must be considered: (1) Has SL become embedded in the Clinic’s operating culture? (2) Has SL increased the Clinic’s employee engagement and improved its patient experience/satisfaction?

The fact that all of the Clinic’s managers and leaders have experienced serving leader (SL) training, that serving leader metrics have been embedded in their formal performance evaluation, and that senior-level serving leader advisors have been trained and deployed across the enterprise—all of this tells us something, but not enough. A better indication of how much SL has taken root in the Clinic’s culture is the fact that, in the words of one manager, “It [SL] has gone viral.” What he meant by this is that all across the enterprise, at the institute, hospital, department, and unit level, SL is being explicitly applied in a wide variety of performance improvement projects. For example:
• The IT department has incorporated SL tools into an ongoing re-design of its operating structure.

• A “Silence Kills” initiative is applying SL principles to “create an environment within the ICUs at Cleveland Clinic where all caregivers feel empowered and have the courage to speak up when they observe unsafe practices or behaviors.”

• The new head of the Pharmacy division is using SL principles to improve the division’s ability to meet patients’ and fellow caregivers’ needs much more effectively and efficiently.

• Leaders at one regional hospital have participated in cohort training to improve their serving leader practices. Leaders at another regional hospital are redesigning their management councils to “reflect a serving leader meeting format.”

• The Regional Operations Institute has “…used serving leader practices to develop a strategy and actions to take the Family Health Centers to the next level of performance.”

• The Medicine Institute is using “…the serving leader change management methodology and providing serving leader coaching for site physicians” in development of a new “Patient Centered Medical Home” care delivery model.

• The Continuous Improvement (CI) group has “integrated serving leader practices into the CI methodology and tools.”

These and other such projects suggest strongly that SL has become widely accepted and practiced at Cleveland Clinic—which raises the question, “To what effect?” The most direct answer to this question lies in the specific Gallup Q12 items previously discussed as being the most obviously related to leadership style:

• I have a best friend at work.

• In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.

• At work my opinions seem to count.

• There is someone at work who encourages my development.

As previously indicated, in the 2008 survey these items were rated the lowest of all the engagement metrics by Clinic employees. On subsequent Q12 surveys, from 2009 through 2013, these items had the greatest increase in their mean ratings across the enterprise. Judging by these results, it seems reasonable to conclude that SL is having a significant, positive effect.

In terms of the Clinic’s overall engagement, it is not possible to tease out the effect of SL from that of other factors, including other engagement-related initiatives such as the Wellness program and Caregiver Celebrations. It is clear, however, that the Clinic has achieved a dramatic improvement in employee/caregiver engagement since 2008. When
compared to other hospital systems in the Gallup database, the Clinic ranked only in the 43rd percentile in 2008; in 2013, it ranked in the 87th percentile. In terms of the ratio of engaged to actively disengaged employees, in 2008 the Clinic’s ratio was only 2.57 to 1. By 2013, that ratio had risen to 10.2:1, above Gallup’s designated “world class” figure of 9.57:1.

With respect to the patient experience, again it is impossible to separate the effect of SL from that of other initiatives, but it is clear that the Clinic’s overall patient satisfaction has improved dramatically. And as shown in Figure 2, this improvement, as measured by the HCAHPS results, maps directly to the improvement in engagement.

**Figure 2.** Patient Satisfaction and Engagement.

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**DISCUSSION**

Since 2008, Cleveland Clinic has successfully implanted servant leader (to revert to Greenleaf’s original terminology) principles into its leadership model, despite considerable initial resistance to this cultural shift. While they may not have abandoned their traditional command and control operating style, it seems clear that at least some of the time the Clinic’s leaders, from supervisor to executive team level, behave as servant leaders. In doing so, they have enabled and reinforced a variety of initiatives specifically aimed at increasing caregiver engagement. As indicated by the results of an ongoing Gallup survey, they have demonstrated in ways not previously apparent that the Clinic as an organization cares about, respects, and values all of its employees—all of its caregivers. The results—in terms of both higher engagement and greatly improved patient satisfaction—indicate that this significant cultural change effort has been well worth the effort.

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Limitations

This paper does not report the results of a formal research study. Rather it describes how servant leadership was implemented as one of a whole set of initiatives at Cleveland Clinic designed to raise the Clinic’s engagement level and patient satisfaction. The data reported in the paper, taken from the Gallup Q12 engagement survey and the HCAHPS survey, do not directly address the causative effect of the servant leadership initiative on the increase in engagement and patient satisfaction that has occurred. As indicated above, it is not possible to separate the effects of the servant leader initiative from the Clinic’s other engagement-related programs.

More formally structured, empirical studies would be extremely valuable in establishing how the implementation of servant leadership in hospital environments may directly affect employee engagement and the patient experience. Perhaps this paper will stimulate others to undertake such research.

In the meantime this paper will hopefully encourage other healthcare organizations to consider implementing servant leadership as they seek to provide a better working environment and deliver higher levels of patient satisfaction.
REFERENCES


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Exploring the Effect of Transformational Leadership on Nonprofit Leader Engagement

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Abstract

Researchers have shown that transformational leadership is a valid leadership theory through research of for-profit organizations; however, there is a lack of empirical support among nonprofit organizations (Riggio, Bass, & Orr, 2004). The intent of this study is to determine whether nonprofit employees are more highly engaged in organizations in which transformational leadership is practiced. Propositions regarding relationships are addressed, including implications and suggestions for future research.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, MLQ, employee engagement, nonprofit

Between 1998-2008, nonprofit creation increased at a record pace of 30.7%, while revenues of reporting nonprofits increased 39.5% (Wing, Roeger, & Pollak, 2010). However, charitable giving by individuals in the U.S. fell by nearly 15%, adjusting for inflation, between 2008-2012 due to the economic hardships beginning in 2007. The ongoing U.S. recession caused nonprofit organizations to face increasing financial challenges and mounting pressure to maintain a highly productive workforce in order to effectively accomplish their visions. In a sample of 363 U.S. nonprofit organizations,
Salamon, Geller, and Spence (2009) found that 83% of respondents reported significant financial stress and 40% reported severe financial stress in 2008-2009, highlighting the need for effective leadership to successfully cope with the current financial crisis. Nonprofits that fail to respond successfully to the impact of the U.S. economic recession may face a significant loss in revenue and even a possible closure.

Nonprofit organizations that hire and develop effective leaders responsible for guiding the efforts of employees and volunteers are more likely to sustain long-term effectiveness and endure economic downturns (Riggio, Bass, & Orr, 2004). Effective leaders influence people and motivate them to contribute beyond expectations (Bolino & Turnley, 2003). Transformational leadership theory argues that it increases an organization’s potential to achieve its goals through higher follower performance, by developing followers to their full potential and increasing their job satisfaction (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1995). Many researchers, such as Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) and Dvir, Eden, Avolio, and Shamir (2002), hypothesized that transformational leaders increase a follower’s desire for high levels of performance, create an environment of strong morality and ethics, and produce greater follower commitment to values of the organization. Tucker and Russell (2004) claim that transformational leaders are indispensable ingredients in organizational development and societal progress. Such leaders reproduce core values in followers and liberate human potential through effective motivation and delegation (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1995).

Many studies link transformational leadership to a variety of positive leadership and business outcomes including those that motivate followers to increase productivity and achieve beyond expectations (Dumdum, Lowe, & Avolio, 2002; Dvir et al., 2002; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Walumbwa & Lawler, 2003; Zhu, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2008). A review of the literature reveals that, although many studies examine the impact of transformational leadership among for-profit organizations, there are far fewer studies of transformational leadership among nonprofit organizations (Riggio et al., 2004). Although researchers link transformational leadership to increased employee engagement in for-profits (Bass, 1998; Bycio, Hackett & Allen, 1995; Walumbwa, Orwa, Wang, & Lawler, 2005; Zhu, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2009), few studies examine whether the same relationships exist in nonprofit organizations.

The purpose of this quantitative study is to examine the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement in nonprofit organizational settings. Specifically, this study will examine the relationship between transformational leadership and the subscales of employee engagement (vigor, dedication, and absorption). This study uses the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ 5x-Short), which measures transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1990), and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9), which measures engagement (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006), to gather data from a population of nonprofit employees.
THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

Transformational Leadership

Research since the 1990s suggests that transformational leadership is related to many positive outcomes within organizations. Transformational leadership positively impacts follower performance in the military (Dvir et al., 2002) and has a positive link to follower commitment (Fu, Tsui, Liu, & Li, 2010; Pataraarechachai & Usahawanitchakit, 2009). Transformational leadership engenders trust through empowering followers thereby increasing performance, and it maximizes the capabilities of individual employees by emphasizing values and morals in order to accomplish organizational objectives. This results in pluralistic leadership, as well as committed and satisfied followers (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Transformational leaders maximize their followers’ potential through the four components of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985a). Howell and Avolio (1992) assert that transformational leaders serve as role models and exemplify moral discipline leading to a positive ethical impact on an organization.

Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods methodologies have been employed in the study of transformational leadership since the seminal works of Downton (1973), House (1977), and Burns (1978). A wide variety of studies have found transformational leadership to be related to positive outcomes, such as commitment, satisfaction, direct follower development, and indirect follower performance, in for-profit organizations (cf. Dumdum et al., 2002; Dvir et al. 2002; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Walumbwa & Lawler, 2003; Zhu et al., 2009). Researchers have conducted many fewer empirical studies of transformational leadership among nonprofit organizations than for-profits (Riggio et al., 2004).

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is referred to as a “positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002, p. 74). It is also described as employee involvement and enthusiasm for their work (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). Employee engagement has been related to high performance (Schaufeli and Salanova, 2007), high student performance (Schaufeli, Martinez, Pinto, Salanova, & Bakker, 2002), and high morale (Britt, Dickinson, Moore, Castro, & Adler, 2007). Employees who are highly engaged often have a positive emotional attachment to their work. Rather than a momentary and specific mindset, engagement is more extensive, not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behavior (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003).

Employee engagement does not have an officially recognized and universally accepted definition and is used at different times to refer to psychological states, traits, and behaviors as well as their antecedents and outcomes (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Researchers question whether it is conceptually distinct from other constructs (Dalal, Brummel, Wee, & Thomas, 2008; Macey & Schneider, 2008).
Employee engagement has received increased attention in the academic literature and in organizations over the past decade, having been linked to many organizational outcomes, including those that increase productivity, profitability, employee retention, and customer satisfaction (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999; Coffman & Gonzalez-Molina, 2002). Human resource consulting firms have heavily marketed its use and advised leaders on how it can be created and leveraged (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Studies by the Gallup Organization showed that 20% of U.S. employees are disengaged, 54% are neutral about their work, and 26% are actively engaged (Fleming, Coffman, & Harter, 2005). Researchers at Towers Perrin (2006) found that 84% of highly engaged employees believe they can positively impact the quality of their organization’s products, compared with only 31% of the disengaged. Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes (2002) concluded that positive relationships exist between employee engagement and customer satisfaction, productivity, profit, employee turnover, and reduction in accidents.

Harter, Schmidt, Kilham, and Agrawal (2009) examined 32,394 business work units consisting of 955,905 employees, using Gallup’s Q12 assessment consisting of nine performance measures of employee engagement and found that business work units scoring in the top half on employee engagement essentially double their odds of success in comparison to those in the bottom half. Those at the 99th percentile have nearly five times the success rate as those at the 1st percentile. Median differences between top-quartile and bottom-quartile units were: 12% in customer ratings, 16% in profitability, 18% in productivity, 25% in turnover (high-turnover organizations), 49% in turnover (low-turnover organizations), 49% in safety incidents, 27% in shrinkage, 37% in absenteeism, 41% in patient safety incidents, and 60% in quality (defects). This study points to the further need for research on whether employee engagement should be considered important in terms of its relationship with organizational leadership.

These studies highlight the organizational benefits produced by increasing engagement. However, researchers have used multiple definitions for the constructs of engagement and various performance outcomes, making it challenging to provide solid conclusions about their relationships with leadership style.

Increased economic challenges and the consistent threat of recession in the United States have caused nonprofit organizations to keep their staffs lean and to seek out ways of effectively leading their personnel (Salamon et al., 2009). The need for a strategic advantage in hiring and retaining the most productive personnel has led to the quest for highly effective leaders. Many researchers believe that highly engaged employees lead to greater productivity and long-term strategic advantage (Harter et al., 2009; Zhu et al., 2009). Scholars have argued that transformational leadership may be positively related to employee engagement, both are theorized to increase a variety of positive business outcomes (Dumdum et al., 2002; Dvir et al., 2002; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Walumbwa & Lawler, 2003; Zhu et al., 2009). Although many studies have found these variables to be positively related, more research is needed to confirm and further generalize the extant findings concerning these relationships. More research is also needed to better understand how transformational leaders influence followers to improve organizational outcomes (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003). Some

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studies question the relationships between these constructs and call for a greater understanding of whether there are positive relationships, why those relationships exist, whether the constructs are distinct or overlap each other, and how they influence one another (Kark & Shamir, 2002; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000; Yukl, 1999).

Since engagement has been linked to positive organizational outcomes, managers would benefit from increasing engagement among their direct reports. By understanding how transformational leadership impacts employee engagement, managers and human resources directors may more effectively train nonprofit leaders to maximize engagement. This study provides insight into how nonprofit leaders may align leadership style with practices that may positively influence engagement. By understanding the factors that increase work-related behaviors and attitudes in nonprofits, corresponding managers may be able to better predict and improve related business outcomes, which may lead to more strategic use of leaders’ time and resources.

The following hypotheses were explored based on the following: There is a statistically significant positive relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement in nonprofit organizational settings.

H1: There is a statistically significant positive relationship between transformational leadership and vigor.

H2: There is a statistically significant positive relationship between transformational leadership and dedication.

H3: There is a statistically significant positive relationship between transformational leadership and absorption.

Although researchers have widely studied transformational leadership and employee engagement, the literature also reveals that few known studies have explored the link between transformational leadership and these constructs among nonprofit organizations. Most studies focusing on nonprofits are limited to a specific organization or a particular organizational type, such as educational institutions, hospitals, churches, or nursing and other health-related organizations (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999; Spinelli, 2006). Riggio et al. (2004) concur that,

There has been surprisingly little empirical research into transformational leadership in nonprofit organizations, particularly in contrast to the large number of studies that have investigated transformational leadership in for-profit companies and in government, military, and educational institutions. (p. 53)

Assessing organizational performance in the nonprofit sector is often difficult because of the lack of a profit motive, thereby significantly diminishing available research (Morris, Coombes, Minet, & Allen, 2007). Egri and Herman’s (2000) comparison of 38 for-profit leaders with 33 nonprofit leaders in the U.S. and Canada revealed that nonprofit environmental firms appeared to be more receptive to transformational leadership than for-profit environmental organizations, underscoring the need for further research in nonprofit organizations.
METHOD

Sample Selection and Data Collection

The target population for this study consisted of nonprofit employees in the U.S., ages 18 to 65 years old. A nonprofit classification system developed by Lampkin, Romeo, and Finnin (2001) for research consisting of ten categories based on organizational purpose was employed to investigate possible correlations. Gender, highest education level attained, years of employment, age group, organizational purpose, number of direct reports, and number of employees in the organization were also requested to investigate possible correlations.

Items for the MLQ 5x-Short (5 subscales with 20 total questions), UWES-9 (3 subscales with 9 total questions), and eight demographic questions were prepared using their original response scales. An online version of these four assessments was created and administered as a single session including questions and instructions. Instructions were given to participants on how to complete the session using the original instructions of the individual instruments.

Measures

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ 5x-Short): Transformational leadership was measured using Avolio and Bass’s (2004) Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. Participants respond to 45 items in the MLQ 5x-Short, using a 5-point scale with responses ranging from 0 = Not at all to 4 = Frequently if not always. This scale is being treated as a continuous measure consistent with the work done by Bass and Avolio (1990), Avolio et al. (1999), and Avolio and Bass (2004). The MLQ 5-x-Short measures the full range of leadership described in Bass’s (1985a) theoretical continuum ranging from transformational leadership to laissez-faire leadership. The MLQ 5x-Short uses forty-five descriptive statements in which the respondent is asked to describe their perceptions of the leadership style of the person to whom they directly report. The MLQ provides high levels of inter-rater reliability (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

The MLQ has nine subscales, the first five of which are measures of transformational leadership: (a) idealized influence (behaviors), (b) idealized influence (attributes), (c) inspirational motivation, (d) intellectual stimulation, and (e) individualized consideration. Only these five subscales were used in this study. The other four subscales measure transactional leadership (contingent reward, active management-by-exception, and passive management-by-exception) and laissez-faire leadership. Correlations among the five transformational leadership subscales are reported to be above 0.70 and significant at \( p < .01 \) (Avolio et al., 1999).

Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9): Employee engagement was measured using the Schaufeli et al. (2006) Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, which has three subscales: (a) vigor, (b) dedication, and (c) absorption. Consisting of nine questions, this instrument uses a 7-point scale with responses ranging from 0 = Never to 6 = Every day. If the participant has had each of the described feelings, they are asked to indicate how often it was felt by identifying the number (from 0 to 6) that best describes how
frequently it was felt. This scale was treated as a continuous measure consistent with the work done by Schaufeli et al. (2006) and Seppälä et al. (2009). Cronbach’s α of the UWES-9 exceeds the generally accepted scale of α > .70 although it is lower than the subscales of the UWES-15 and UWES-17 because Cronbach’s α tends to increase with test length (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003).

**Data Analysis**

Correlational analysis was used to measure the relationships among the continuous variables (Cooper & Schindler, 2011). The primary benefit of correlational analysis is that it helps make predictions about variables that are related, however a main disadvantage is that correlational analysis does not measure causation (Vogt, 2007). In order to investigate relationships between linearly-related variables, Pearson’s $r$ is recommended when there is a normal distribution (Cooper & Schindler, 2011). Fields’ (2009) assumptions of Pearson’s $r$ include: (a) the sampling distribution is normally distributed, and (b) all data is interval.

When there is not a normal distribution, the nonparametric test, Spearman’s Rank Order correlation ($r_s$), should be utilized to determine the strength and direction of association (Fields, 2009). Normality was tested using the Shapiro-Wilk Test. If the significance value of the Shapiro-Wilk Test is greater than 0.05 then the data is considered to be normally distributed. If it is below 0.05 then the data does not have a normal distribution.

The instruments used in the study (i.e., MLQ 5x-short, UWES) consist of Likert-type ordinal scales that were treated as continuous variables (Avolio et al., 1999; Avolio & Bass, 2004; Bass & Avolio, 1990; Schaufeli et al., 2006; Seppälä, et al., 2009). Reliability for each subscale was established using Cronbach’s alpha (Fields, 2009). Results were reported by showing whether there was a significant relationship to two decimal places.

**Validity and Reliability**

**Validity**

Avolio and Bass’s (2004) factorial analysis of the MLQ demonstrated strong construct validity, with subscales ranging from moderate to good. Rowold and Heinitz’s (2007) empirical study of the MLQ supported content validity and convergent validity with each of the MLQ’s subscales, and that transformational leadership was divergent from transactional leadership. The criterion-related validity for transformational leadership was found to be high by Avolio and Bass (2004). Judge and Piccolo (2004) used regression analysis and meta-analysis to calculate an overall relative validity score of .44 for transformational leadership on the MLQ based on 626 correlations from 87 sources, demonstrating that transformational leadership displays the strongest and most consistent correlations and highest levels of validity among the leadership styles within the MLQ.

Schaufeli and Bakker’s (2003) exploratory factor analysis of the UWES confirmed the discriminate and convergent validity for each of its three subscales. Further
confirmatory factorial analysis revealed that the UWES-9 demonstrated strong factorial validity (Schaufeli et al., 2006). Seppälä et al. (2009) used confirmatory factor analyses in five studies (N = 9,404) of mainly white-collar, occupational groups (i.e., dentists, educational staff, health care staff, managers, and young managers), including a three-year longitudinal study of dentists (n = 2,555) to examine the construct validity of the UWES-17 and the UWES-9. Results indicated that the structure of the UWES-9 remained relatively unchanged, supporting the construct validity of the UWES-9. Furthermore, structural equation modeling has demonstrated high rank-order stabilities for the work engagement factors (between 0.82 and 0.86), leading to the conclusion that work engagement seems to be a highly stable indicator of occupational well-being (Seppälä et al., 2009).

Reliability

Reliability of these instruments has been demonstrated in a number of previous studies. The Avolio et al. (1999) quantitative research collected data through a total of 3,786 respondents in 14 independent samples of the MLQ, with sample sizes ranging from 45 to 549. The models were tested originally in a nine-sample set and then a second time with a five-sample set. When comparing initial samples with replication samples, consistency and reliability were high (i.e., .80 to .90).

Schaufeli and Salanova’s (2007) calculation of Cronbach’s alpha demonstrated that the UWES-9 had reliabilities varying from .70 to .80. Confirmatory factor analysis suggested that the UWES-9 demonstrated good internal consistency and test-retest reliability (Schaufeli et al., 2006).

RESULTS

Demographics

A total of 547 people clicked on the hyperlink to participate in the survey. However, some individuals were excluded from taking the survey because they did not indicate consent, were not currently working for a nonprofit, or indicated an age under 18 or over 65. Of the 487 consenting participants, 389 indicated they were both currently working for a nonprofit and between 18-65 years old. Therefore, this study sample consisted of the responses of these 389 participants.

Demographic questions included age, gender, highest education level completed, years of employment with the organization, organizational purpose, number of direct reports, and number of employees in the organization. Of the 389 participants, 17 did not complete the demographics section of the survey. Therefore, 95.6% (n = 372) of participants provided demographic information.

Participants were well-distributed across all age groups. The age groups most represented were 25-34 years and 55-65 years. Little data was found regarding average age of nonprofit employees although Johnston and Rudney’s (1987) study of a sample of 6,260 nonprofit employees showed that the majority of nonprofit employees ranged from 16-54 years of age (86%) and the most frequent category was 16-34 years of age (52%).
Johnston and Rudney (1987) forecasted that there would be a growth in the older segment of nonprofit workers over the next 20 years, which Halpern’s (2006) study confirmed is a growing trend in nonprofit organizations. This sample may similarly reflect the growing trend in older workers of nonprofit organizations, with 23.4% of nonprofit employees who were 55-65 years of age.

The majority of participants (68.1%) were female. This is consistent with Halpern’s (2006) report that 68% of all nonprofit employees in the U.S. are female.

Of the participants in this study, 77.8% had college degrees. A high percentage of participants (92.5%) attended at least some college. No recent educational data on U.S. nonprofit employees was found in a literature review. However, 70% of Canadian nonprofit employees had college degrees in a study conducted in 2007-2008 (HR Council for the Nonprofit Sector), which is consistent with this sample.

The majority of participants (59.9%) had worked at their current employer for four years or less. No comparison data was found on nonprofit employee years of employment in an organization frequency.

The greatest number of participants (33.2%) worked for an organization whose purpose is human services. In order of highest frequency to lowest frequency, organizational purpose was (a) human services; (b) religion related; (c) public societal benefit; (d) health; (e) education; (f) arts, culture, and humanities; (g) environment and animals; (h) international; (i) mutual/membership benefit; and (j) unknown. According to Wing et al. (2010), the top three purposes of U.S. nonprofits are human services, education, and public societal benefit. This study similarly reflects the nonprofit population with the exception of a significantly lesser amount of those whose organizational purpose is education.

The majority of participants (52.4%) did not have any direct reports. Of those who did have direct reports, the majority had 1-4 employees directly reporting to them. No comparison data was found on the frequency of nonprofit employee direct reports.

The majority of participants (53.9%) worked for organizations that had 1 to 50 employees, while most (79.9%) worked in organizations that had 1-500 employees. In a survey with a sample of over 500 U.S. nonprofit organizations, Nonprofit HR Solutions (2010) found that median staff size of U.S. nonprofits was 45 employees, reflecting similar characteristics of this sample.

In summary, the majority of participants in this sample were female, had at least some college experience, had worked at their current employer for four years or less, did not have direct reports, and worked for organizations that had between 1 to 500 employees and whose purpose was human services, religion related or public societal benefit. The sample in this study was approximately similar to the U.S. nonprofit employee population in gender, age, education, and organizational purpose and size (Halpern, 2006; Johnston & Rudney, 1987; Nonprofit HR Solutions, 2010).
Internal Consistency Reliabilities and Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics and Cronbach’s alpha were calculated for each subscale of transformational leadership and employee engagement, as shown in Table 1.

The first subscale of transformational leadership is idealized influence (behaviors). The mean value for idealized influence (behaviors) was 3.41 of a 5-point scale (SD = 1.03), signifying that participants indicated their supervisors behave in ways that emphasize a strong sense of purpose and talk about their most important values and beliefs. The second subscale of transformational leadership is idealized influence (attributes). The mean value for idealized influence (attributes) was 3.50 (SD = 1.08), suggesting that participants indicated their supervisors act in ways that build respect and provide a strong role model to follow. The third subscale of transformational leadership is inspirational motivation. The mean value for inspirational motivation was 3.50 (SD = 1.03), indicating that their supervisors communicate an inspired vision. The fourth subscale of transformational leadership is intellectual stimulation. The mean value for intellectual stimulation was 2.99 (SD = 0.99), signifying that their supervisors encourage their creativity through arousing awareness of how problems can be solved. The fifth subscale of transformational leadership is individualized consideration. The mean value for individualized consideration was 3.25 (SD = 1.04), signifying that their supervisors lead them through a developmental orientation and serve as a role model to them.

The first subscale of employee engagement is vigor. The mean value for vigor was 5.29 on a 7-point scale (SD = 1.39), indicating that participants have high levels of energy and the willingness to invest in one’s work. The second subscale of employee engagement is dedication. The mean value for dedication was 5.92 (SD = 1.24), indicating that participants feel a strong sense of significance, inspiration, and challenge from their work. The third subscale of employee engagement is absorption. The mean value for absorption was 5.58 (SD = 1.27), indicating that participants feel the sense of being happily engrossed and immersed in one’s work.

Reliability measures whether an instrument consistently reflects the construct it is measuring (Fields, 2009). When the same identities are measured under different conditions, an instrument should produce consistent results. Cronbach’s alpha of .70 or higher indicates strong reliability. Cronbach’s alpha was measured for each of the three instrument subscales. The results are shown in Table 1.
The subscale scores ranged from .80 to .87, indicating high internal consistency. These scores are consistent with reliability measures reported by Schaufeli and Salanov (2007) and Avolio et al. (1999). Cronbach’s alpha was calculated using $n = 373$ rather than $n = 389$ because 16 of the participants did not answer each question. The MLQ 5x-Short had subscale scores of .80 for each subscale. Correlational analysis was conducted on the subscales to further investigate reliability of the MLQ 5-x Short instrument. The results are shown in Table 2.

The correlational analysis of the MLQ 5x-Short for this population showed that all variables were significant at the 0.01 level, demonstrating that the MLQ 5x-Short shows strong reliability, with one exception. The correlation between intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation was .68, less than the desirable alpha of .70 or higher.

### Table 1. Reliability and Descriptive Statistics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<td>Intellectual stimulation</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualized consideration</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vigor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>5.30</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absorption</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>5.92</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>5.58</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Correlation Analysis on the MLQ 5x-Short Instrument.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Idealized influence (behaviors)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Idealized influence (attributes)</td>
<td>.76**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Inspirational motivation</td>
<td>.80**</td>
<td>.80**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Intellectual stimulation</td>
<td>.71**</td>
<td>.75**</td>
<td>.68**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Individualized consideration</td>
<td>.70**</td>
<td>.80**</td>
<td>.70**</td>
<td>.79**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. II (B) = Idealized influence (behaviors); II (A) = Idealized influence (attributes); IM = Inspirational motivation; IS = Intellectual stimulation. ** $p < .01$.

### Normality

Fields’ (2009) assumptions of Pearson’s $r$ include: (a) the sampling distribution must be normally distributed, and (b) all data must be interval. Normality of this study’s sample was tested using the Shapiro-Wilk Test. If the value of the Shapiro-Wilk $W$ is greater than .05 then the data is considered to be normal. If it is below .05 then the data does not have a normal distribution. The Shapiro-Wilk test shows that this sample violated the assumption of normality. Therefore the nonparametric test, Spearman’s Rank Order correlation, was utilized to determine the strength and direction of association. Spearman’s Rank Order correlation can be used when the data have violated parametric assumptions such as normally distributed data (Fields, 2009). Correlational
analysis was conducted using the Spearman's Rank Order correlation with levels of significance at $p < .05$ for each of the subscales of transformational leadership using the following sub-hypotheses. Results are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. Correlation Analysis using Spearman’s rho.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>II (B)</th>
<th>II (A)</th>
<th>IM</th>
<th>IS</th>
<th>IC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vigor</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.24**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>.36**</td>
<td>.37**</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>.31**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absorption</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>.17**</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>.14**</td>
<td>.16**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. II (B) = Idealized influence (behaviors); II (A) = Idealized influence (attributes); IM = Inspirational motivation; IS = Intellectual stimulation; IC = Individualized consideration. * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.*

There was a strong, positive statistically significant correlation between transformational leadership and each of the engagement subscales.

**Transformational Leadership and Employee Engagement**

The correlational analysis showed that vigor is positively and significantly correlated with each of the five transformational leadership subscales. For hypothesis (H1) there is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and vigor.

Dedication is positively and significantly correlated with each of the five transformational leadership subscales. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H2) is rejected. There is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and dedication.

Absorption is positively and significantly correlated with each of the five transformational leadership subscales. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H3) is rejected. There is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and absorption. In summary, vigor, dedication, and absorption were positively and significantly correlated with each of the five transformational leadership subscales.

**Demographic Correlations**

Correlational analysis investigated how the demographic variables correlate with the various measures. Table 4 shows the correlations between demographic variables and transformational leadership subscales.

**Table 4. Correlation Analysis using Spearman’s rho - Demographics.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>II (B)</th>
<th>II (A)</th>
<th>IM</th>
<th>IS</th>
<th>IC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Age</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.12*</td>
<td>-.14**</td>
<td>-.14**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Gender</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Education</td>
<td>-.13**</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.16**</td>
<td>-.15**</td>
<td>-.11*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Years Employed</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Direct Reports</td>
<td>-.14**</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.12**</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Employees</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.10*</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. II (B) = Idealized influence (behaviors); II (A) = Idealized influence (attributes); IM = Inspirational motivation; IS = Intellectual stimulation; IC = Individualized consideration. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.*
There was a statistically significant positive correlation between intellectual stimulation and number of employees. There was a statistically significant negative correlation between: (a) inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and age; (b) idealized influence behaviors, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and education; and (c) idealized influence behaviors, inspirational motivation, and number of direct reports.

DISCUSSIONS

Leadership in nonprofit organizations can be significantly different than leadership among for-profit organizations. Differences may include a focus on cause rather than profits, reliance on voluntary workforce, functions, and forms of governing boards, less attractive compensation for leadership, and requirements of external agents as a prerequisite for funding (Riggio et al., 2004). These differences may compel nonprofit leaders to significantly adjust leadership style to fit the unique problems and opportunities of nonprofits.

This study suggests that there is a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership as defined by the MLQ 5x-Short and the three subscales of employee engagement (vigor, dedication, and absorption) as defined by the UWES. This study furthers the argument that transformational leadership raises followers to higher levels of potential while satisfying higher order needs and would therefore be expected to positively relate to higher level of engagement (Zhu et al., 2009).

Correlational analysis revealed a strong, positive statistically significant correlation between intellectual stimulation and number of employees. Possible explanations for this may be that transformational leaders attract greater numbers of employees when encouraging followers’ creativity through arousing awareness of how problems can be solved. Emery and Barker’s (2007) correlational analysis concluded that the transformational leadership component of intellectual stimulation was more highly correlated (significant at the $p < .01$ level) with job satisfaction and organizational commitment than the transactional leadership components of contingency reward and management-by-exception. Future studies may want to consider the possible mediating effects of an organization’s number of employees.

Correlational analysis revealed a strong, negative statistically significant correlation between: (1) inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and age; (2) idealized influence behaviors, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration and education; and (3) idealized influence behaviors, inspirational motivation, and number of direct reports. This may suggest that transformational leadership may have less positive impact on followers as they increase in age, education, and the number of direct reports. Barbuto, Fritz, Matkin, and Marx’ (2007) empirical investigation of the effects of gender, education, and age upon leaders’ use of influence tactics and full range leadership behaviors showed that the combined interaction of gender and education produced consistent differences in leadership behaviors. Future studies may want to consider the possible mediating effects of age, education, and number of direct reports.
Implications for Research

Results of this study indicate that transformational leadership is positively correlated with employee engagement. These findings are consistent with studies by Zhu et al. (2009). This study may therefore significantly contribute to leadership theory and the larger body of knowledge that seeks to understand how leadership style impacts positive business outcomes such as employee engagement. This study highlights the need for future studies on how transformational leadership theory may need to be reconsidered among nonprofits.

Scholarly literature has primarily focused on the impact of transformational leadership among for-profit organizations. Nonprofit organizations are much less frequently utilized in scholarly research (Wilensky & Hansen, 2001). Much more research is needed on employee productivity and attitudes among nonprofit organizations. Evidence of a lack of scholarly literature among nonprofits is in the Jossey-Bass Handbook of Nonprofit Leadership and Management (Herman, 1994), which utilizes scholarly literature based on for-profit research to discuss the behavior of individual employees, rather than research conducted within nonprofits (Goulet & Frank, 2002). Finally, future theories may need to address the demographic differences of nonprofit employees with those of for-profit employees. Studies may give consideration to the skewed gender of nonprofit employees (68% female to 32% male) or the increasing workforce of those aged 55 years or older.

Implications for Practice

This study suggests that nonprofit leaders who want to increase employee engagement in their organizations may benefit from utilizing the transformational leadership style. The strong positive correlation between transformational leadership and engagement indicates that there may need to be a greater focus on hiring leaders who employ the transformational leadership style and training current employees to lead with the transformational leadership style. Human resource managers and executives of nonprofits may want to specifically train employees to employ greater idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, and inspirational motivation.

By understanding the variables that increase or decrease work-related behaviors and attitudes in nonprofit employees, nonprofit leaders may be able to better predict and improve related business outcomes and therefore lead to more strategic use of leaders’ time and resources. If transformational leaders are indispensable ingredients in organizational development and societal progress as Tucker and Russell (2004) claim, nonprofit leaders should consider how to best utilize transformational leadership in the nonprofit sector.

Recommendations

Focusing on the differences between nonprofits and for-profit organizations could expand the extant knowledge and literature. More research is needed on how these differences (e.g., a focus on cause rather than profits, reliance on voluntary workforce, functions and forms of governing boards, less attractive compensations for leadership,
requirements of external agents as a prerequisite for funding) (Riggio et al., 2004) impact leadership style. For example, the reliance on a voluntary workforce by nonprofits may significantly impact how transformational leaders inspire and develop followers. Systematic attention to the experiences and motivations of volunteers may positively influence business outcomes (Snyder & Omoto, 2007). Additionally, the motivation of volunteers may be different than that of paid employees and may therefore impact nonprofit leadership style. Researchers should empirically examine whether volunteer motivation and differences between nonprofit and for-profit organizations impact engagement as well as leadership style.

Future studies may also expand the literature by concentrating on this study’s limitations. For example, quantitative research uses descriptive data rather than using data from human behavior in which the researcher personally interacts with participants. This may limit understanding of unique behaviors that affect the variables being studied. This study may not surface underlying singularities that influence the interaction of transformational leadership and engagement.

Scholars may want to utilize different measures for transformational leadership and engagement. The MLQ 5x-Short has shown evidence that it may be more valid and reliable for American companies and thus, may not be generalizable to all cultures, including that of nonprofit organizations, due to lack of consideration of social distance and factors relating to gender (Alban-Metcalfe & Alimo-Metcalfe, 2007; Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe, 2001; Hunt & Peterson, 1997). The ETLQ may be employed to account for these potential factors (Alban-Metcalfe & Alimo-Metcalfe, 2007). Gallup’s Q12 instrument, which was used by Zhu et al. (2008, 2009) in studies that found significant and positive relationships between transformational leadership and engagement, may provide further opportunity for investigation of the impact of leadership style on engagement.

Assumptions and Limitations

Quantitative research using descriptive data may be limited by the study’s theories and categories, which may not reflect the understandings of participants. Additionally, the inability to gather data from human behavior in which the researcher personally interacts with participants may limit understanding of unique behaviors that may affect the variables being studied. Moreover, by focusing on hypotheses testing rather than theory generation as in qualitative studies, the research may not surface underlying singularities that impact the variables being studied. It is impossible to rule out or control all variables and therefore quantitative research may exclude relevant human experience (Cooper & Schindler, 2011).

The population is limited to English-speaking American respondents. The MLQ 5x-Short has shown evidence that it may be more valid and reliable for American organizations and thus, may not be generalizable to all cultures. Although the population of the study provides education, gender, age, years employed, number of direct reports, organizational purpose, and geographical heterogeneity, generalizability may be limited to nonprofits in the United States. Additionally only those with internet access could
participate in the web-based assessment, which may further limit generalizability to employees who are active internet users.

Furthermore, the current financial challenges and wide economic fluctuations in the United States may skew responses in comparison to responses given during more stable, consistent economic times. The current challenges among nonprofit organizations are unprecedented in contemporary settings in terms of sharply reduced charitable giving by individuals (Hall, 2011), providing further potential for skewing of results.

Summary

In summary, this study indicates there is a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership and the three subscales of employee engagement (vigor, dedication, and absorption). Implications for research and practice and recommendations for future research highlight the need for more quantitative and qualitative research on the generalizability of transformational leadership instruments among nonprofits, the impact of financial recession on nonprofit employees’ engagement and the demographic and behavioral differences between nonprofit employees and those of for-profit organizations and how these may impact leadership style and engagement. Perhaps future studies may extend transformational leadership theory, provide further practical approaches and paradigms with which organizations can evaluate leadership and implement strategies for greater leadership effectiveness, and reveal how nonprofit leaders may improve and sustain a more productive environment in nonprofit organizational settings.
REFERENCES


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Servant Leadership, Followership, and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors in 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Centers: Implications of a National Study

Lora Reed, Ashford University

Abstract

Servant leadership is a multi-dimensional construct accentuating service to others and value creation for community. Here, servant leadership is examined as related to followership and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) in emergency communications centers (ECCs) throughout North America. Literature on servant leadership is reviewed and compared with similar leadership styles. The importance of proactive followership as opposed to passive followership, as well as OCBs, along with their relevance to servant led ECCs are considered. Study methods are described, results are presented and implications of findings are discussed. The paper concludes with a brief analysis of the study’s limitations and suggestions for future research.

Keywords: Servant Leadership, Followership, Organizational Citizenship Behaviors, 9-1-1 Emergency Communications, Executive Servant Leadership Scale, Implicit Followership Scales
Competencies of qualified 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Center (ECC) employees include advanced technological skills, high-level multi-tasking abilities, and community-oriented ethical leadership. Technological skills enable emergency dispatchers and call takers to accurately sustain a pace of detailed data processing and information management essential for handling emergency calls in a dynamic, episodic, often highly-stressful environment. The ability to multi-task enables these employees to create and maintain a sense of stability with distressed callers as they assist other first responders, often directing them to attend to emergency situations. Competent ECC call takers, dispatchers, and other employees must be community-oriented ethical leaders. This is because ECC personnel at multiple levels lead, if only briefly, others with whom they come into contact. Employees take cues from self and others, including callers and colleagues, to complete tasks inherent to their occupational environment – before, during, and after emergency situations. In essence, it is posited here that ECC employee leadership is important to individuals, agencies, communities, and society at large.

This study explores the notion that, at best, many ECC employees are servant leaders working within a culture of servant leadership. The study does not imply that all employees of 9-1-1 ECCs are servant leaders. Nor does it assert that all ECCs are servant led. This study explores whether employees within some ECCs perceive their organizations as servant led and, if so, what that means for their organizations. Servant leader style was chosen for examination within this study over other types of leadership because, as Greenleaf ([1970] 1991, p. 2) asserts, “the great leader is seen as servant first and that simple fact is the key to his greatness. Leo [a character in Herman Hesse’s Journey to the East] was actually the leader all of the time, but he was servant first because that was what he was, deep down inside.”

Most ECC employees do not choose their occupation with the idea that they want to lead others in mind. However, all prospective ECC employees must consider that their occupational field was created for the sole purpose of serving others in distress. Qualified employees and well-functioning ECCs serve both distressed callers and first responders such as firefighters, medical personnel, and law enforcement. And, like Leo, in Hesse’s (2003) Journey to the East, most often, ECC employees are invisible servants in society. Like Leo, these employees are “servant[s] who do[es society’s] menial chores, but who also sustain [others] with spirit and song” (Greenleaf, [1970] 1991, p.2). ECC employees can be persons as what Greenleaf ([1970] 1991, p. 1) termed “of extraordinary presence.” In fact, life without competent ECC employees would be immensely problematic for society, yet dispatcher retention is an ongoing staffing issue (APCO, 2009). This study considers how and if servant leadership is important for the functioning of ECCs.

**Importance of Research**

This research is valuable to both scholars and practitioners in several ways. First, this research contributes to the body of scholarly management, leadership, and human resources literatures, and, most directly, to the servant leadership literature in terms of the specific work context. Further, examining possible relationships between servant leadership, followership, and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) can add to the

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knowledge of these constructs through application of the Executive Servant Leadership Scales (ESLS) and the Implicit Followership Scales (IFS).

The research may be directly beneficial to ECCs, thus serving an underserved population in an important occupational field. Despite the large body of research addressing the impacts of servant leadership on individuals and organizations, no published studies have investigated servant leadership as related to organizational culture, followership, and OCBs within ECCs. The research also contributes to the knowledge of how to improve employee retention through better understanding ECC organizational culture in terms of servant leadership orientation, followership, and OCBs.

Research related to employee retention and its relationship to servant leadership in ECCs is crucial for many reasons. First, more research is needed on both the individual and organizational levels of analysis to better understand how a servant led culture contributes to staffing, employee development, leadership, and talent retention in an ever changing, high-tech occupational field. Research related to servant leadership in ECC culture might also provide insight into if, and how, servant leadership can be developed and sustained in such essential occupations. It might provide insight into perceptions of meaningful work and relationships among servant leaders and followers in this occupational field. Answers to these types of questions may lead to increased knowledge of servant leader development in other occupations. Finally, this research may help decision makers better address staffing issues related to employee accommodation, leader development, followership, organizational culture, and OCBs.

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership, as first introduced by Robert Greenleaf ([1970] 1991) in his essay, *The Servant as Leader*, describes one motivated by a desire “to serve first,” realizing that leadership is “bestowed” and can be taken away. The servant leader style is tested by whether “other people’s highest order priority needs are being served;” this leader “is more likely to persevere and refine his hypothesis on what serves another’s highest priority needs than is the person who is leader first and who later serves out of promptings of conscience or in conformity with normative expectations” (Greenleaf [1970] 1991, pp. 2-8).

According to Keichel (1995), the servant leader lives to achieve a greater social good. Rather than seeking power for personal gain, he or she is motivated by a desire to serve others (Greenleaf, [1970] 1991). Similarly, at best, ECC occupations exist to serve others – both first responders and emergent callers in communities. Like Leo in *Journey to the East* (2003), ECC call takers and dispatchers share powerful stories, many of which sustain their work teams and enhance the quality of other people’s lives (Reed, 2005). Consistently, Greenleaf ([1970] 1991) delineated servant leader competencies that represent a remarkable work ethic. This study explores whether the servant leader work ethic is characteristic of ECC organization leadership at their finest functioning levels (Reed, 2005). Here, ECCs are examined as a context in which servant leaders, observed as employees at various organizational levels, may be developed and sustained. It is
posited that ECCs are but one context in which servant leaders may be observed as well as encouraged to grow and thrive.

**Why Servant Leadership Instead of Other Leadership Styles?**

The most important differentiation between servant leadership and other types of leadership is the motivation within servant leadership to serve others so that both the leader and follower fulfill their potential. According to Greenleaf ([1970] 1991, p. 7):

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 he benefit, or, at least, will he not be further deprived?

Indeed, this test differentiates both the motivation and objectives of the servant leader from all other leadership styles that have been postulated to date.

Servant leadership is a form of ethical leadership (Reed, Vidaver-Cohen, & Colwell, 2011). Greenleaf ([1972] 2009, p. 6) describes the servant-led institution as one wherein “individuals who want to serve must, on their own, become institution builders where they are.” Relationships between servant, transformational, spiritual, and authentic leadership have recently been well-documented (cf. Brown & Trevino, 2006; Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Reed et al., 2011). Table 1 summarizes key similarities and differences between servant leadership and these related constructs. The brief descriptions that follow the table include specific examples of how these forms of leadership compare with servant leadership as demonstrated in the ECC context.

**Table 1.** Key Differences & Similarities: Servant, Transformational, Spiritual, & Authentic Leadership.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Similarities with Servant Leadership</th>
<th>Differences with Servant Leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transformational Leader</strong></td>
<td>-(pseudo) selfish, politically motivated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Works for Collective Purpose</td>
<td>- Driven by organizational objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Provides inspirational motivation through meaningful work, encourages creativity, considers individuals</td>
<td>- Servant Leader is driven by motivation to serve others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spiritual Leader</strong></td>
<td>- Driven by sense of spiritual calling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Embodies values such as integrity, honesty, humility</td>
<td>- Servant Leader is driven by motivation to serve others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Serves as example that can be trusted, admired, and relied upon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Authentic Leader</strong></td>
<td>- Driven by motivation to be true to oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Deep awareness of their behavior, motivated by values, aware of context in which they operate, open &amp; transparent, considerate</td>
<td>- Servant Leader is driven by motivation to serve others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Brown & Trevino, 2006, pp. 598-600)
Transformational Leadership

The very nature of “serving relationships with their followers” …“contrasts with transformational leaders, who transcend followers’ interests toward organizational goals” (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006, p. 319). Stone, Russell, & Patterson (2004) assert that the emphasis on serving and developing needs of followers more so than organizational objectives is distinctive of the servant as opposed to transformational leader. Simply stated, the servant leader’s “desire to serve people supersedes organizational objectives” (2004, p. 355).

Smith, Montagno, & Kuzmenko (2004) argue that “servant leadership stresses a leader’s concern for the follower’s well-being reflected in receptive non-judgmental listening and willingness to learn from others. These behaviors are not accounted for by any behaviors in the transformational model.” When compared to transformational, the servant leader “engenders a more ‘sensitive’ leadership style…” as he “…is more concerned with the emotional needs of employees and other organizational stakeholders” (Smith et al., p. 85).

Qualified ECC employees share common objectives, but the very essence of their work is to serve others in need of assistance. Designated leaders and other employees perceive their work as service to others, as is frequently demonstrated when a call taker or dispatcher who, amidst handling an emergency at the end of a shift, completes the call rather than passing it off to an employee coming on shift. The needs of the caller are necessarily valued over organizational staffing or personal goals; it is the nature of the work, and of the person who fits well into the occupation, to serve a greater goal. Where and when possible, the ECC team leader supports employees to minimize the impact of such situations on all stakeholders, but the needs of the caller are always paramount.

Spiritual Leadership

Fry (2003, p. 711) defined spiritual leadership as “comprising the values, attitudes, and behaviors that are necessary to intrinsically motivate one’s self and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership.” The spiritual leader relies on a sense of calling related to both leader and followership and characterized by altruistic love (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Brown & Trevino, 2006). Spiritual leadership’s “ultimate effect” is to bring body, spirit, mind, and heart together to “create a sense of fusion among [these] four fundamental forces of human existence”… “so that people are motivated to high performance, have increased organizational commitment, and personally experience joy, peace, and serenity” (Fry, 2003, p. 727).

Although servant leaders may feel that service is their calling, and they are often motivated at least in part by altruism, their end goal is to serve and inspire others to “become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous and more likely to become servants themselves” (Avolio et al., 2009, p. 437). Qualified ECC leaders are likely to be aware of, but not serene about, situations that disturb callers and the community. This is often revealed when a call taker is offered support from colleagues after an acutely stressful emergency. As Greenleaf ([1970] 1991, p. 14) stated, “[People] grow taller when those...
who lead them empathize and when they are accepted for what they are, even though their performance may be judged critically in terms of what they are capable of doing.” The competent ECC leader attempts to restore health to the situation, thereby freeing a distressed call taker or dispatcher to again serve others.

**Authentic Leadership**

Authentic leaders are aware of how they think and behave. These leaders care about how they are perceived by others, can be “confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and high on moral character,” but, unlike the servant, the authentic leader’s ultimate objective is “being true to oneself” or authenticity (Brown & Trevino, 2006, p. 599). In fact, reflection is a skill critical for both ECC employees and servant leaders. It is what Greenleaf ([1970] 1991, p. 12) described as “The ability to withdraw and reorient oneself”...“to sort out the more important from the less important – and the important from the urgent – and attend to the more important, even though there may be penalties and censure for the neglect of something else.” Greenleaf ([1970] 1991) affirms the ultimate objective of the servant leader to “...constantly ask himself, how can I use myself to serve best?” ECC employees who lead and remain in their occupation for any length of time clearly have to gain great self-awareness and an understanding of the degree of self-care essential for survival. However, the nature of occupations such as emergency dispatchers and call takers is to serve others. This often requires putting the interests of others before self and may be a developmental process.

Thus far, servant leadership has been defined, compared with other leadership styles, and considered in the context of ECCs. Next, the ECC servant as leader is operationalized using specific dimensions of the ESLS.

**Servant Leaders in the ECC**

Much has been written about servant leadership from a normative or philosophical perspective, suggesting what servant leaders should do. And, some scales have been created to measure servant leadership at individual and organizational levels of analysis (cf. Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005; Dennis & Winston, 2003; Ehrhart 2004; Hale & Fields, 2007; Joseph & Winston, 2005; Laub, 1999; Liden et al., 2008; Page & Wong, 2000; Sendjaya et al., 2008; Vidaver-Cohen et al., 2010; Whittington et al., 2006; Wong & Page, 2003). In addition, several recent studies have examined impacts of servant leadership on organizations (cf. Dannhauser & Boshoff, 2006; Drury, 2004; Ehrhart, 2004; Irving, 2004; Irving & Longbotham, 2006; Jenkins & Stewart, 2008; Joseph, 2007; Joseph & Winston, 2005; McIntosh & Irving, 2008; Ostrem, 2006; Parolini, 2005; Washington, Sutton, & Feild, 2006). Few studies, however, have considered relationships between servant leadership and, specifically, ECCs as servant led institutions (Reed, 2005, 2008).

So far, tasks of ECC employees appear aligned with characteristics of servant leaders in terms of work ethic and competencies. Closer examination of ECC organizations and culture provides a means of investigating how servant leaders in servant led institutions might look in the workplace. In addition, if one considers decisions emergency dispatchers and call takers make as the first intended to fulfill a
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series of actions conducive to assisting callers and other first responders, one quickly realizes even these employees are uniquely positioned to function, if only momentarily, as executive decision makers. Although ECC leaders do not often make decisions that directly impact shareholder profits, their decisions do have direct impacts on individuals, families, organizations, communities, and society. If only momentarily, their decisions have impacts of executive magnitude on others, such as the paramedic, firefighter, or law enforcement agent who is attempting to serve the needs of an emergent caller in distress. Sometimes these decisions are matters related to life and death. The servant leadership visible within ECCs aligns to the dimensions of the ESLS (ESLS; cf. Vidaver-Cohen et al., 2010) in the following ways:

Interpersonal Support – represents helping organizational members at all levels grow and develop their potential. Interpersonal support can help employees “grow as persons” and become “more likely to become servants themselves” (Greenleaf 1970/1991, p. 7). Perhaps, as new employees observe their ECC forerunners as team or organizational leaders, they can see interpersonal support modeled just as dispatchers and call takers support emergent callers, other first responders, and, when necessary, each other as a normal component of job performance.

Building Community – can occur both within and outside an organization. In ECCs, the effect spills over to emergent callers, as well as to other first responders in public safety organizations. The construct involves valuing individual differences and inspiring organizational commitment through cooperation. Central is the idea that servant leaders recognize their moral duty to consider organizational impacts on all involved in the emergency. The purpose of their work is to improve the communities in which their organizations are nested.

Altruism – or unselfish concern for others is operationalized as “serving others willingly, with no expectation of reward, sacrificing personal benefit to meet employee needs, placing the interests of others before self-interest, and preferring to serve others over being served” (Reed et al., 2011). Altruism is both at the heart of servant leadership and the core of ECC leader occupational competencies.

Egalitarianism – rejects the notion that leaders are superior to other organization members. Egalitarianism is demonstrated when the leader can debate ideas, take constructive criticism from others and display an interest in learning from all members of the organization, regardless of level or tenure. Greenleaf realized egalitarianism was central to servant leadership and “critical for executive legitimacy within a firm” (Reed et al., 2011). In well-functioning ECCs, it is common knowledge that, if only for brief periods, every employee leads by serving.

Moral Integrity – the ‘moral organization’ is comprised of ‘moral men’ and women. Greenleaf ([1972] 1991) knew the moral organization was conducive to a ‘moral society.’ As such, he realized moral integrity was fundamental to servant leadership. The ESLS operationalizes this dimension as promoting transparency and inspiring trust. The servant leader “…refuses to use manipulation or deceit to achieve personal goals, freely admitting mistakes, and valuing integrity over profit or material gain” (Reed et al., 2011). When considering moral integrity as pertinent to ECC leaders, one must first reflect on

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people who are usually tech savvy and could work in more extrinsically rewarding environments, yet some of the most talented and capable people choose to lead in an intrinsically motivated field where their efforts are visible as service to others—when they are seen at all.

Thus far, servant leadership has been defined, articulated, and operationalized as pertinent to leaders in the ECC organization. Servant leadership has been compared to other related leadership theories. This raises the first research question:

Research Question #1: Do ECC employees at multiple levels perceive their organization’s leadership as demonstrating a servant leadership orientation? Specifically, do they perceive that their leaders demonstrate a servant leadership orientation in terms of the dimensions measured by the ESLS: Interpersonal Support, Building Community, Altruism, Egalitarianism, and Moral Integrity?

Next, servant leadership is considered as it pertains to proactive and passive followership, beginning with situational influences and follower perceptions.

**ECC Leader as Servant: Situational Influences & Follower Perceptions**

Situational factors influence employee perceptions of leaders as servants in the workplace. These include role modeling, organizational culture and OCBs. Neubert, Carlson, Kacmar, Roberts, & Chonko (2009, p. 159) assert that, “the behavior of managers who have positional and personal power is of particular interest to organizational members.” Social learning theory affirms that “[by] observing an ethical role model’s behavior as well as the consequences of their behavior, leaders should come to identify with the model, internalize the model’s values and attitudes, and emulate the modeled behavior” (Brown & Trevino, 2006, p. 600). This idea is at the nucleus of servant leadership and followership. Neubert and colleagues (2009, p. 157) found positive relationships existed between ethical leadership, follower job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. These researchers learned that, “when interactional justice is perceived to be high, this strengthens the ethical leadership-to-climate relationship” (Neubert et al., 2009, p. 157).

**Servant Leader Role Modeling**

Servant leaders can serve as proximate, positive role models in ECCs, making it likely that new employees are inspired to follow and become servant leaders themselves. Ehrhart (2004, pp. 69-70) posited that “The behavior that servant-leaders model includes ‘serving’ their [employees] by forming quality relationships with them and helping them grow and develop. Thus, [work] units with servant-leaders should have members who will emulate this behavior.”

Carsten, Bien, West, Patera, & McGregor (2010) created the Implicit Followership Scales (IFS) to measure passive and proactive followership as responses related to status and social construction of reality depending on styles of leadership and organizational culture. These researchers affirm that passive followership is often a response to authoritarian leaders in bureaucratic environments. Proactive followership is most often a response to supportive or shared leadership in empowered environments. Although ECC
employees often work in bureaucratic organizations, the nature of their work necessitates empowerment as episodic leadership of others. Thus, in situations where ECCs are servant led, there may be a positive relationship to proactive followership because servant leaders intend to develop other servant leaders (see Greenleaf, 1970, 1972, 1977).

Research Question #2: Do ECC employee perceptions of their organization’s executive servant leadership orientation demonstrate a positive relationship to either passive or proactive followership?

Next, ways in which servant leadership and proactive followership might be perceived by followers in ECCs are considered.

Servant Leadership, Proactive Followership & ECC Organizational Culture

Leaders prescribe the culture wherein organizational members either thrive or wither in their work. Organizational culture is defined as shared meaning including innovation and risk-taking, detail, people, team, and outcome orientations, aggressiveness, and stability (Robbins, 2003).

In a recent study of servant leadership, emotional intelligence, and organizational culture, Parolini (2005) found follower perceptions of supervisor leadership behaviors was a highly significant predictor of perception of servant leadership culture. Essentially, as employees perceived supervisors “to serve, empower and cast vision to them” they were more likely to experience the organization as servant led. As leaders guarded interests of the followers and organization over their own personal benefit, a mutual sharing of responsibility and power with followers was facilitated, including cultivating follower feedback as part of improving organizational vision. Parolini (2005, p. 11) found it likely that followers perceived the leader and culture as servant oriented “through valuing and developing people, building relational and authentic community, and providing and sharing leadership.” The ways in which employees are valued are demonstrated through OCBs. This leads to the third research question.

Research Question #3: How, if at all, are employee perceptions of their organization’s executive servant leadership orientation related to ECC employee OCBs?

It is proposed here that well-functioning ECCs will be comprised of qualified employees who demonstrate servant leadership through positive OCBs as expressed toward the organization and each other.

ECC Servant Leadership and OCBs

OCBs can be directed toward the organization (OCB-O) or individual (OCB-I). Both foci illuminate relationships between job attitudes and job performance (Ehrhart, 2004). In the ECC context, servant leadership OCB-Os might manifest as compassion in the form of personal support for emergent callers and/or other first responders, such as police, firefighters, and/or emergency medical personnel for whom ECC employees provide episodic support. OCB-I s might manifest as the sense of community that exists in a center wherein individuals often engage in such episodic calls. Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie (2006) posited that, with respect to followers, servant leader OCBs involve nurturing, defending, and empowering. Organ and colleagues’ (2006) servant leader OCB
characteristics are depicted as ECC behaviors in Table 2. The items were created in collaboration with ECC subject matter experts whose knowledge was shared for purposes of this study. Such behaviors can clearly be perceived as relevant in either the OCB-O or OCB-I examples provided here.

**Table 2.** Items for Measurement of OCBs in ECC Organizational Culture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCB / Demonstrated as</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nurturing: OCB-I: When my leadership involves caring for my peers in the organization (e.g., relieving a peer after a particularly stressful work episode, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defending: OCB-O: When the work I perform is rewarding in ways that far exceed the compensation I receive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering: OCB-O: When leadership means serving our community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation and Risk-Taking: OCB-O: When we are each expected to lead others (e.g., teams of telecommunicators, peer groups, citizens, field units, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People, Team and Outcome Orientations: OCB-I: When I do not hear about the final outcome of a call in which I have been involved.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In a study examining servant leader responsibility to followers, Ehrhart (2004) found fairness and leadership perceptions to be important antecedents of OCBs. Ehrhart (2004) chose the servant leadership model for the study, in part, because it emphasized follower development as a priority; servant leadership, as it pertains to follower development, acknowledges a leader’s responsibility to stakeholders beyond competency development of direct reports. Greenleaf (1977) asserted that, “the secret of institution building is to be able to weld a team of [imperfect people] by lifting them up to grow taller than they would otherwise be” (p. 35). This is an expressly important task when the team is charged with alleviating the burdens of emergent callers and other first responders in what are often the most difficult moments of their lives.

From a social learning perspective, “situations that have the potential to cause great harm are likely to be socially salient and focus observer attention” (Brown & Trevino, 2006, p. 602). Since consequences of behavior in ECCs can be great, employees pay close attention to each others’ behaviors and most assuredly to the behaviors of the leaders visible in their organizations. Using the ESLS, the servant leadership style articulated by Greenleaf ([1970] 1991), and input from ECC subject matter experts, relationships between ECC leaders, employees, organizational behavior outcomes, and a servant led culture were explored in this study. Table 3 lists ESLS characteristics as they relate to employee competencies and desired organizational behavior outcomes in 9-1-1 emergency communications centers. Notably, the ESLS was “developed to enable researchers to test hypotheses about the relationship between executive servant leadership and organizational outcomes” (Vidaver-Cohen et al., 2010). In addition, the ESLS is differentiated from other servant leadership measures because of its focus on top organizational executives. Decisions of 9-1-1 ECC leaders are not often directly measured in terms of profits for corporate shareholders, but they are often measured in
terms of direct impacts on the lives of individuals, families, organizations, communities, and society at large.

Table 3. Servant Leadership, ECCs & OCBs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Servant Leader Characteristic</th>
<th>ECC Competency</th>
<th>Desired Organizational Behavioral Outcomes (OCBs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moral Integrity</td>
<td>Communication Skills</td>
<td>Enhanced Contextual Performance – translation of critical information into knowledge that instructs first responders and members of the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Integrity</td>
<td>Communication Skills</td>
<td>Enhanced Contextual Performance – typically unravel detailed information from emotionally distraught callers to initiate/coordinate first response events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Support</td>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>Enhanced Contextual Performance; Person-job fit – callers and first responders often require encouragement, support, and emotional healing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build Community</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Person-Job Fit – must make decisions based on their awareness of stakeholder needs in emergent situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build Community</td>
<td>Communication Skills</td>
<td>Enhanced Contextual Performance – ECC employees are intermediaries between agencies sharing information; persuasion is an art for cooperation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build Community</td>
<td>Multi-tasking</td>
<td>Enhanced Contextual Performance; Person-job fit; Employee Retention – qualified ECC employees look at their work from the promontory of service to society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build Community</td>
<td>Multi-tasking</td>
<td>Enhanced Contextual Performance – The occupation clearly requires a great deal of foresight and consideration for the needs of all stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altruism</td>
<td>Sense of Community</td>
<td>Enhanced Contextual Performance; Person-job fit; Employee Retention – ECC employees serve everyone with whom they come into contact; this occupation is entirely related to stewardship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Integrity</td>
<td>Sense of Community, Pride in Performance of Team</td>
<td>Enhanced Contextual Performance; Person-job fit; Employee Retention – ECC employees have a commitment to the success of all stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egalitarianism</td>
<td>Esprit de Corps</td>
<td>Enhanced Contextual Performance; Person-job fit; Employee Retention – this is a matter of preserving the sanctity of the group for telecommunicators.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DESCRIPTION OF METHODOLOGY

In spring 2010, a rater/self-report questionnaire was created using a modified ESLS (see Vidaver-Cohen et al., 2010; Reed et al., 2011), IFS (cf. Carsten et al., 2010), and five items intended to measure ECC-specific OCBs created in collaboration with a panel of ECC subject matter experts.

In spring (April - May) and early summer (June), for a period of 90 consecutive days in 2010, the questionnaire was available electronically through Survey Monkey. The link to the questionnaire was disseminated by 9-1-1 Lifeline, a non-profit organization that assisted in data collection at no cost. The leaders of this non-profit recognized the research could benefit an important, underserved, and understudied population if and when it is disseminated widely.

Data and Sample

The questionnaire was disseminated electronically to ECC employees in 9-1-1 Lifeline’s membership and to their email lists of members of the National Academy of Emergency Dispatchers, National Emergency Number Association, and the Association of Public Safety Communications Organizations, Intl. Email ‘blasts’ were dispersed weekly for 90 days, reaching approximately 10,000 potential respondents and resulting in a snowball sample of 897 respondents from North America (specifically US and Canada) and Australia. The sample was homogeneous based on occupational field (e.g., 9-1-1 ECC employees). Notably, this was the first occupation-specific study using the ESLS. The sample was heterogeneous based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, organizational tenure and organizational context (e.g., law enforcement, fire service, emergency medicine, etc.). The sample was purposive, meaning participants self-selected to opt-in from their ECCs. The probability of any employee self-selecting from these agencies was equal; participants were not pre-selected by the researcher. To that extent, the sampling was a random selection (Babbie, 2004). No incentives were offered for respondents’ participation, but they were assured of confidentiality and anonymity at the individual level.

Measures

Independent (predictor) variables – Independent (predictor) variables were servant leadership dimensions as identified by Vidaver-Cohen and colleagues (2010) in the ESLS, a 25-item questionnaire developed by Vidaver-Cohen and colleagues (2010) to measure five first-order factors “reflecting essential attributes defined by Greenleaf. A second-order factor [servant leadership] captures the idea that correlated but distinct factors, each measured by multiple items, can best be explained by one or more underlying higher order constructs” (Reed et al., 2011). The instrument was chosen over others that did not specifically address the importance of contributing to community, providing interpersonal support, and cultivating a service-oriented culture. The ESLS was also chosen for its strong reliability and validity (cf. Vidaver-Cohen et al., 2010; Reed et al., 2011), ease of use, availability, and emphasis on executive servant leadership. First-order factors of the ESLS include the following factors: 1) interpersonal support (a = .94); 2) building community (a = .90); 3) altruism (a = .93); 4) egalitarianism (a = .94).
and; 5) moral integrity ($a = .95$). The ESLS was modified for employees at all levels to rate their direct supervisors and other leaders as “My agency’s leadership” rather than “executive leadership” and themselves as followers. All 25 scale items were enterable using a 4-point, forced choice Likert scale: “Never” (1), “Rarely” (2), “Frequently” (3) and “Always” (4). A fifth category, “Don’t know,” was coded 0.

The decision to use a 4-point rather than a 5 or 7 point scale was based on feedback from scale reviewers who felt that a middle category such as ‘neither agree nor disagree’ could be confounded with the ‘don’t know’ category and as such could lead to spurious results (Vidaver-Cohen et al., 2010, p. 18).

The dependent variables – Proactive and Passive followership were examined in terms of their relationships with Servant Leadership. Proactive and Passive followership were measured using adapted (11) items of the IFS. IFS items were modified for employees at all levels to rate organizational members as “In my agency” and the items listed in Table 4. All modified items were enterable using a 4-point forced choice Likert scale: “Strongly Disagree (1), “Disagree” (2), “Agree” (3), and “Strongly Agree” (4). The decision to use 4-point instead of 5 or 7 for the IFS was intended to not confound the “don’t know” (0) category thereby leading to spurious results (Vidaver-Cohen et al., 2010, p. 18). The modified IFS was chosen because the scales measure Proactive and Passive followership. According to Carsten and colleagues (2010), Passive followership is a response to authoritarian leadership in a bureaucratic environment and Proactive followership is a response to supportive or shared leadership, such as servant leadership, in an empowered environment. The IFS items are listed in Table 4.

Table 4. Revised Implicit Followership Scale Items.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proactive Leadership Items</th>
<th>Passive Leadership Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Those who follow realize that organizational leaders are open to suggestions they can offer.</td>
<td>1. When one is following, he/she does not have to worry about being involved in decision-making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Those who follow still communicate their opinions, even though they know leaders may disagree.</td>
<td>2. At the end of the day, those who follow leaders cannot be held accountable for the performance of the organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. As part of their role, those who follow are willing to challenge supervisors’ assumptions.</td>
<td>3. Those who follow leaders do not have to take on much responsibility for thinking about how things get done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Those who follow proactively identify problems that could affect the organization.</td>
<td>4. Not being a leader means that you don’t have to think about changing the way work gets done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Those who follow should be proactive in thinking about things that could go wrong.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Those who follow are also leaders and this is essential to getting work done.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Those who follow share responsibilities similar to those of the top leadership.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OCBs were measured by assessing participant responses to statements about contextual and task competencies related to their employment beginning with, “In my agency….” The items considered environmental, social, and episodic factors pertinent to nurturing, defending (cf. Organ et al., 2006, p. 105), and empowering dispatchers and call takers. They are listed in Table 2. As with the ESLS and IFS, OCBs were enterable using a four-point, forced choice Likert scale: “Strongly Disagree” (1), “Disagree” (2), “Agree” (3) and “Strongly Agree” (4). The decision to use 4-point instead of 5 or 7 was intended to not confound the “Don’t know” (0) category thereby leading to spurious results (Vidaver-Cohen et al., 2010).

Other questionnaire items were used to collect organizational and demographic data including age, sex, organizational level, shift worked, and educational level. One open-ended qualitative ‘additional comments’ text box was provided at the end of the questionnaire for qualitative responses.

**Data Analysis**

After questionnaire access was closed, the data were downloaded from Survey Monkey into Microsoft Excel version 2010 and then into SPSS version 19. There were initially 897 respondents, but 253 cases were removed due to missing values on greater than 5% of the items and/or patterns of missing items that did not appear to be random (cf. Kalton & Kaspryzk, 1982; Trochim, 2001). When the data were cleaned, a total of 644 respondents remained. Of the final sample, 235 respondents (36.49%) were male and 409 (63.51%) were female. The final sample included employees from 353 ECCs across North America, including 344 (97.45%) in the US and 9 (2.55%) in Canada. A summary of respondents’ demographic and organizational characteristics is provided in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Demographic & Organizational Characteristics of Total Respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Org. Level</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dispatcher/ Call-taker</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>&lt;20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispatcher</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift supervisor</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Staff</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle management</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>50-64</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>65+</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Coordinator</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>CBR*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional/ Technical</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Job</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td>644</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td>644</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistical analyses of the data included t-tests, correlation analyses using Pearson’s correlation coefficient, and descriptive statistics (e.g., mean and median scores, standard deviations, etc.). This allowed for examination of dependence relationships in conjunction with multiple dependent variables. Additional analytical procedures such as...
ANOVA and multiple regression analysis were used for exploratory purposes after the initial research questions were addressed.

**Findings**

In response to the first research question,

*Do ECC employees at multiple levels perceive their organization’s leadership as demonstrating strong servant leadership orientation? Specifically, do they perceive that their leaders demonstrate a servant leadership orientation in terms of the dimensions measured by the ESLS: Interpersonal Support, Building Community, Altruism, Egalitarianism, and Moral Integrity?*

The findings suggest that yes, they do perceive their leaders as servant leaders. The mean composite score for the Servant Leadership construct was 2.81 with a standard deviation of .73 and a standard error mean of .03. The mean scores for each item of the ESLS are listed in Table 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>Std. Dev</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Support</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Community</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altruism</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egalitarianism</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral Integrity</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servant Leader Composite</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a group, ECC employees at all organizational levels perceived their organization’s leadership as demonstrating higher than mid-range scores for all five dimensions of Executive Servant Leadership with the highest mean composite score in Moral Integrity (3.12) and the lowest in Interpersonal Support (2.76) which may have a bearing on employee retention in ECCs (cf. Aquino, Griffeth, Allen, & Hom, 1997; Tepper, 2000). This is because employees may perceive their leaders as having integrity, but do not feel supported in their efforts within a high stress environment. While the means are higher than the mid-point of the forced-choice scale, this does not necessarily mean that ECC employees perceive their leaders as being more servant leadership oriented than employees might within other fields. It does, however, indicate that many ECC employees do perceive their leaders as servant leaders. Additional research is needed in this area.

In response to research question #2, *Do ECC employee perceptions of executive servant leadership orientation demonstrate a positive relationship to either passive or proactive followership?*

The findings indicate that the answer to the first part of the question, *“Do ECC employee perceptions of executive servant leadership orientation demonstrate strong passive leadership styles?”* is no. Mean scores for both passive (2.02) and proactive
(1.41) followership of the respondents were low on the 4 point Likert scale with proactive followership the lowest, as depicted in Table 7. For interpretation of statistical results, a mid-point of 2.5 was employed to minimize any possible biases resulting from scale items offered with forced choice 4-point Likert scales. Friedman and Amoo (1999) suggest the use of a forced choice approach is appropriate “when the researcher has good reason to believe virtually all subjects have an opinion and you do not want them to ‘cop out’ by indicating they are uncertain” (p. 4). However, subjects that are undecided may select ratings from the middle of a scale. This can cause two biases: (a) the appearance “that more subjects have opinions than actually do [and] (b) the mean and median will be shifted toward the middle of the scale” (Friedman & Amoo, 1999, p. 4). Table 7 depicts the Passive and Proactive followership mean scores and standard deviations for this study’s respondents at all organizational levels.

### Table 7. One Sample Statistics: Passive and Proactive Followership Mean Scores (compared to mid-point 2.5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Followership</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactive</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, the findings indicate that when it comes to proactive followership, the second part of research question #2, the answer is yes. High servant leadership orientation is correlated with proactive followership based on a 2-tailed T-test, a strong significance was demonstrated as a positive relationship between high proactive followership and servant leadership (.96) and a significant negative relationship (-.16) between high servant leadership orientation and passive followership was demonstrated, as is depicted in Table 8.

### Table 8. Pearson Correlations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Servant Leader</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>-.16**</td>
<td>.96**</td>
<td>.42**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Passive Follower</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.21**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Proactive Follower</td>
<td></td>
<td>.96**</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.36**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: N = 644. 2-tailed test and .01 confidence level

Finally, in response to the third research question, How, if at all, are employee perceptions of their organization’s executive servant leadership orientation related to ECC employee OCBs?

ECC employee perceptions of executive servant leadership orientation demonstrated a strong positive relationship to the OCB ($R^2 = .42$) items created with the ECC experts. The mean score for OCBs created in collaboration with ECC experts was 3.22 with a standard deviation of .47 and a standard error mean of .02. This suggests that where employees perceived their organization to be servant led, they also perceived positive...
evidence of the OCBs listed in Table 2. Further, there is a negative relationship between the OCBs and passive followership ($r = -.21$) and a positive relationship between the OCBs and proactive followership ($r = .42$) as demonstrated in Table 8 (above). This finding suggests that employees who did not perceive their organization to be servant led also did not perceive the OCBs (Table 2) to be strongly demonstrated.

**DISCUSSION**

This research addresses important questions related to servant leadership, followership, and organizational citizenship in ECCs. It lays the groundwork for future studies with this occupational group. This study explores how servant leaders inspire followers to lead as servants who demonstrate positive OCBs in an important occupational field, but it is the first study of its kind. By examining relationships between ECC executive servant leadership orientation, followership, and OCBs, the study offers insight into ECC organizational culture, as well as contributes to the leadership, management and human resources literature. The study advances knowledge of the ESLS and IFS measures. Future studies will consider gender, age, organizational level, staffing, and shift work, organizational context (e.g., law enforcement, fire rescue, emergency medical, etc.), and other variables in terms of how they relate to the preliminary findings of this study. These initial findings are important in a number of ways, some of which are considered below.

**Research Question #1:** Do ECC employees at multiple levels perceive their organization’s leadership as demonstrating a servant leadership orientation? Specifically, do they perceive that their leaders demonstrate a servant leadership orientation in terms of the dimensions measured by the ESLS: Interpersonal Support, Building Community, Altruism, Egalitarianism, and Moral Integrity?

In this study, respondents’ mean scores on all dimensions of servant leadership were above the mid-point of 2.5 (on a 4-point forced choice Likert scale). This suggests that ECC employees perceive their organization’s leaders as having a servant leadership orientation. Future studies could explore this question by examining other types of agencies in order to recognize differences in perception of executive servant leadership based on organizational purpose and culture (e.g., law enforcement, fire rescue, emergency medical, combined organization, etc.). Future research could also consider perceptual differences based on gender, employee’s organizational level, employee tenure, and similar factors. Future studies might also consider how the various dimensions of the ESLS pertain to followership and OCBs, both at organizational and individual levels.

**Research Question #2:** Do ECC employee perceptions of their organization’s executive servant leadership orientation demonstrate a positive relationship to either passive or proactive followership?

Although overall, ECC employees did not demonstrate noticeable proactive or passive followership styles, there was a strong positive relationship between executive servant leadership orientation and proactive followership ($R^2 = .96, p \leq .01$, see Table 8).
In other words, when employees perceive their organizations as servant led, they are proactive and empowered. This supports previous research wherein proactive followership was found to be positively related to employee empowerment in shared leadership culture (Carsten et al., 2010). The highest mean ‘proactive’ item score (3.33) was found for followers’ sense of responsibility in terms of thinking about how things could go wrong. In the context of an emergency 9-1-1 communications center, this sense of responsibility can be an extremely powerful employee attribute. This study’s findings suggest that, since proactive followers are desired in ECCs, decision makers may wish to consider developing servant leadership behaviors among organizational leaders.

**Research Question #3: How, if at all, are employee perceptions of their organization’s executive servant leadership orientation related to ECC employee OCBs?**

The study demonstrates a strong positive relationship between servant leadership and OCB items developed in collaboration with ECC experts ($R^2 = .42, p \leq .01$, see Table 8). This is not surprising given that the primary goal of a servant leader is to serve. The finding does not indicate all ECCs are servant-led, but it does suggest that those ECCs in which employees perceive their leaders as servant leaders also highly value OCBs. Further research is needed to explore the relationships among servant leadership, OCBs, proactive followership, and organizational culture.

OCBs conducive to servant-led ECC culture include: expecting employees to lead others in diverse communities; recognizing leadership as a form of service; caring for one’s peers; finding intrinsic reward within one’s work; and sharing small wins and losses in the form of emergency call outcomes. Each of these behaviors is vital to the functioning of ECCs. OCBs such as these could enrich the functioning of not only ECCs but most other types of organizations as well.

**Study Limitations**

This research is not without limitations. First, data were collected using rater and self-report questionnaires disseminated electronically by a single source resulting in a snowball sample from existing email lists from professional organizations. This means some ECC employees may not have been reached during data collection. Second, the lack of generalizability for the study presents another limitation since respondents were all from a single field, making it a valid study of ECC employees, but raising questions of applicability within other fields. Third, this research is exploratory in nature and limited in terms of the number of factors examined. Future research may consider more in-depth analysis of the impact of individual and organizational characteristics not included within this study. Finally, this research does not consider cultural differences among respondents. Hale and Fields’ (2007) empirical findings indicated that national differences in servant leadership exist. Conversely, however, Carroll and Patterson’s findings (2014, p.18) assert that “servant leadership is a universal leadership model, because at its core is something that is common to all cultures – humanity.” Future research may include variables that capture information on cultural differences.
Suggestions for Future Research

Although employee retention in ECCs has been problematic since the inception of the occupation (APCO, 2009), there are many exemplary individuals who choose to stay and lead in these agencies for much or all of their entire working career. Future research should explore servant leadership, proactive followership, and OCB orientations of such employees. In addition, servant leadership exhibited in and around the well-functioning ECC may be among the reasons why many employees choose to remain in the field for much of their working careers. Future suggestions for research in this area that may contribute to both the scholarly literature and ECC decision making include the following:

Development of Best Practices in Dispatcher Competencies

According to the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (2009, p. 12-17), best dispatcher competencies include, but are not limited to: a) technological aptitude, including multimedia applications, the need for which is expected to increase due to rapid technological advances; b) strong emotional intelligence, which pertains to understanding one’s self and others, including peers, other first responders, and emergency callers; c) leadership, which is necessary at all organizational levels, and; d) positive OCBs directed toward both the organization and individual colleagues. OCBs can be related to employee well-being, employee commitment, and social influence on others in addition to the overall functioning of the unit. This research found a strong relationship between employee perceptions of servant leadership and OCBs. Future research might examine the means by which leader and follower relationships could lead to OCBs and other best practices in dispatcher competencies.

Servant Leadership and Employee Recruitment, Selection and Retention

In 2009, emergency dispatcher national retention rates were at 83%, with an average employee turnover rate near 17% (APCO, 2009). That rate is exacerbated by increasing environmental stressors and high-tech opportunities. Although the recent economic downturn may have increased the number of candidates who apply for dispatcher positions, “more does not [always] equal better.” (APCO, 2009, p. 3-4). Future research could examine employee ESLS dimensions for purposes of employee selection, retention, and leader development. APCO (2009) delineates five factors affecting retention including: a) Full staffing; b) Overtime hours; c) Job complexity; d) Compensation, and e) Working conditions. Future research might explore if and how each factor relates to servant leadership, followership, and OCBs. For example, Table 6 shows that employee perceptions of leader Moral Integrity (mean score of 3.12) and Building Community (mean score of 2.90) were much higher than Interpersonal Support (mean score of 2.76). Future research might also explore types of relationships between employee retention, servant leadership, proactive followership, and the OCBs as defined by the ECC experts. Team or shift discussions of how emergency calls were handled, and/or their outcomes where appropriate, can provide opportunities for leaders to model ethical behavior for peers and direct reports. This is at the heart of both social learning perspective and the servant-led culture. Future research might examine how team sharing of outcomes of
emergency calls (and related information) determines employee job satisfaction and retention.

**Servant Leadership and Employee Job Satisfaction**

APCO (2009, p. 5-6), ranks factors affecting employee job satisfaction as (#3) appreciation by management, (#5) effective mentoring processes, (#6) appreciation by immediate supervisor, and (#8) appreciation by media [community] – all of which might be explored as related to servant led culture, proactive followership, and OCB-Os/OCB-Is in emergency communications centers.

**CONCLUSION**

As technological advances continue to occur at unprecedented rates, natural disasters become increasingly profuse, and baby boomers, the largest segment of the U.S. population, continue to retire, it is imperative for ECCs to select, develop and retain competent employees – all of whom are leaders. Developing servant led agencies may assist in enhancing ECCs as employers of choice, which is important to society and to ECC decision makers. This research suggests that when ECC leaders are perceived as servant leaders, proactive followers are perceived as empowered, sharing responsibility. This study suggests that perceived servant leader orientation within ECCs is positively related to OCBs, as defined by industry subject matter experts, and a servant leadership orientation also initiates an important dialogue about relationships between leaders and followers, as well as how they engage in OCBs within emergency communications centers.
SERVANT LEADERSHIP: 9-1-1- CENTERS  91

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The Servant Leadership of Abraham Lincoln
Crystal Brown, Regent University

Abstract
The article encompasses a theoretical servant leadership model that includes humility and empathy with respect to the United States presidency, specifically Abraham Lincoln’s time in office. Empathizing can be seen with respect to Lincoln’s understanding both sides of an issue in order to make an informed and best decision possible regarding the United States’ well-being. Lincoln’s time as President during the Civil War gave him the opportunity to show this empathy to both the North and the South through his speeches, significantly, his second inaugural address.

Keywords: Servant Leadership, Abraham Lincoln, empathy, U.S. Presidency
Servant leadership can be characterized by ten traits: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of others, and building communities (Crippen, 2004, p. 13). The trait that is exhibited most in the passage above is empathy. Parolini (2004) stated that "Servant leaders are defined by their ability to bring integrity, humility, and servanthood into caring for, empowering, and developing others in carrying out tasks and processes of visioning, goal setting, leading, modeling, team building, and shared-decision making" (p. 9). Therefore, we will look at empathy in United States (U.S.) political leadership as it pertains to the U.S. presidency, specifically the presidency of Abraham Lincoln and how humility promotes empathy and eventually cultivates into servant leadership.

Lincoln, in an address to Congress on December 3, 1861, stated “The struggle of today is not altogether for today -- it is for a vast future also. With a reliance on Providence, all the more firm and earnest, let us proceed in the great task which events have devolved upon us” (Lincoln, 1861). The aforementioned quote can apply to any political leader and the importance of studying Lincoln as a servant leader will lead to a greater understanding of the theory of servant leadership with respect to the U.S. presidency and other national political offices as well in present day.

According to Marchal (2007), Jesus was a servant leader in that “One proposal suggests that the hymn echoes the Suffering Servant image of Isaiah 53, especially in its affirmation that Christ "humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death (Philippians 2:8, NASB).” (p. 247). Since Jesus humbled himself as a servant even until the point of death, then He should be seen as a servant leader. This claim can be supported by the following: “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men” (Philippians, 2:5-7, NASB). In order to reach his followers, Jesus needed to be among his followers to show he was truly the son of God.

Leaders must be able to be compassionate towards others. Greenleaf states “Individuals grow taller when those who lead them empathize and when they are accepted for what they are, even though their performance may be judged critically in terms of what they are capable of doing. Leaders who empathize and who fully accept those who go with them on this basis are more likely to be trusted” (Crippen, 2004, p.

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“Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8, NASB) supports the aforementioned claim. Therefore, the case can be made for a theoretical model, seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Overview of Theoretical Model.

Humility & Empathy

According to Winston (1999), a leader “should love their subordinates, peers, superiors, as well as their competitors. Showing concern for others and putting their needs and interests to the fore demonstrate empathy and elicit trust”. Patterson (2003) states that humility is one of the seven constructs of servant leadership, the others include follower empowerment, altruism, trust, agape love, visionary characteristics, and serving others. Moreover, Dennis and Bocarnea (2005) created an instrument that can help leaders assess their own levels of servant leadership. “The researchers used a 71 item scale and factor analysis that contributed to finding 42 items that produced five factors - empowerment, love, humility, trust; and vision” (pp. 607-609).

How do humility and empathy relate to one another? In order to empathize with followers, leaders must first humble themselves. In other words, they must think that they are no better than their followers. Additionally, leaders who possess the ability to act humbly with respect to knowledge in their specific field are eager to learn new facets of that field. A humble leader openly admits his/her mistakes and learns from them. Finally, a humble leader focuses on empowering followers, rather than building his/her ego (Patterson, 2003).

Furthermore, empathy from leaders promotes trust between a leader and his followers. Although Jesus did not come to the earth to become a political leader in the modern sense, He paved the way for political leaders by setting an example of using empathy as a tool of servant leadership. Jesus was sent by God to walk among the living in order to gain our trust and to teach obedience to the Father. Philippians 2:8 supports this claim by stating “Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (NASB). He endured the pain that most of us can never imagine. Jesus needed to come to Earth as a man in order to show others what it is to be obedient to God the Father (Guzik, 2003).

Lincoln as a Servant Leader

When we think of empathy within the office of the U.S. presidency, we often think of Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln is a figure who showed a great deal of empathy throughout his entire political life. “Lincoln did not merely possess a strategic mind, although he
excelled at political calculation. Even as a political novice, with empathy as his guide, Lincoln possessed an innate ability to intuit the motivations of his interlocutors” (Shogan, 2009, p. 863). Essentially, Lincoln was able to see both sides of the political arena. For example, Lincoln did not like the idea of slavery; however, he also felt empathy for the slave owners. “As much as he could, Lincoln tried to place himself in the position of the slave owners to better understand their point of view” (p. 864), this inclination towards compassion for either side can be confirmed by a letter written to Joshua Speed. The following excerpt from this letter describes a trip to New Orleans and had a great impact regarding his opinion on slavery.

You may remember, as I well do, that from Louisville to the mouth of the Ohio there were on board ten or a dozen slaves shackled together with irons. That sight was a continued torment to me; and I see something like it every time I touch the Ohio, or any other slave border. It is hardly fair for you to assume, that I have no interest in a thing which has, and continually exercises, the power of making me miserable. You ought rather to appreciate how much the great body of the Northern people do crucify their feelings, in order to maintain their loyalty to the Constitution and the Union. I do oppose the extension of slavery because my judgment and feeling so prompt me, and I am under no obligations to the contrary. If for this you and I must differ, differ we must. You say, if you were President, you would send an army and hang the leaders of the Missouri outrages upon the Kansas elections; still, if Kansas fairly votes herself a slave State she must be admitted, or the Union must be dissolved. But how if she votes herself a slave State unfairly, that is, by the very means for which you say you would hang men? (Lincoln, 1855).

Consequently, this disagreement between the two men and the empathy in which Lincoln shows in agreeing to disagree can be supported by Colossians 3:12-14.

"Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (NASB).

Moreover, Lincoln’s empathy turned his enemies into supporters. “After Lincoln won the presidency in 1860, he knew that he had defeated others who had more experience than him. He might have embraced hubris and created formidable political enemies. Instead, he stroked bruised egos and gained several political allies; Lincoln transformed his enemies into his supporters throughout his career” (Shogan, 2009, p. 864).

Additionally, empathy in a political leadership role allows the president to “see the whole picture. Unlike members of Congress, the president is a national representative. Representing the entire nation is an impossible task, yet empathy can enable a president to comprehend the plight of others he does not know intimately. As president, Lincoln

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read a letter from a young woman whose father had been killed in the Civil War, and who had entered a dark depression after his death” (Shogan, 2009, p. 865). The letter from the young woman enabled Lincoln to understand how the war was affecting those surrounded by it. This type of knowledge in a democratic country, such as the United States, is crucial in making decisions for the whole.

Another example of Lincoln as a servant leader is a quote that was written in a letter to constituents that was read by James Conkling on August 26, 1863 to Lincoln’s hometown of Springfield, Illinois. With the United States in the middle of the Civil War, Lincoln felt he could not leave Washington, D. C. The following is an excerpt from the speech noting how peace can be restored to the nation.

There are those who are dissatisfied with me. To such I would say: You desire peace; and you blame me that we do not have it. But how can we attain it? There are but three conceivable ways. First, to suppress the rebellion by force of arms. This I am trying to do. Are you for it? If you are, so far we are agreed. If you are not for it, a second way is to give up the Union. I am against this. Are you for it? If you are, you should say so plainly. If you are not for force, nor yet for dissolution, there only remains some imaginable compromise. I do not believe any compromise, embracing the maintenance of the Union, is now possible. All I learn, leads to a directly opposite belief. The strength of the rebellion is its military — its army. That army dominates all the country, and all the people, within its range. Any offer of terms made by any man or men within that range, in opposition to that army, is simply nothing for the present; because such man or men, have no power whatever to enforce their side of a compromise, if one were made with them. To illustrate. Suppose refugees from the South, and peace men of the North, get together in convention, and frame and proclaim a compromise embracing a restoration of the Union; in what way can that compromise be used to keep Lee’s army out of Pennsylvania? Meade’s army can keep Lee’s army out of Pennsylvania; and I think, can ultimately drive it out of existence. But no paper compromise, to which the controllers of Lee’s army are not agreed, can at all affect that army. In an effort at such compromise we should waste time, which the enemy would improve to our disadvantage; and that would be all. A compromise, to be effective, must be made either with those who control the rebel army, or with the people first liberated from the domination of that army, by the success of our own army. Now allow me to assure you, that no word or intimation, from that rebel army, or from any of the men controlling it, in relation to any peace compromise, has ever come to my knowledge or belief. All charges and insinuations to the contrary, are deceptive and groundless. And I promise you, that if any such proposition shall hereafter come, it shall not be rejected, and kept a secret from you. I freely acknowledge myself the servant of the people, according to the bond of service — the
United States Constitution; and that, as such, I am responsible to them (Lincoln, 1863).

Moreover, empathy encourages intuitive speech which can be seen from Lincoln’s second inaugural address. “The sentence ‘Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other’ is an attempt by Lincoln to force Northerners and Southerners to understand the common tradition that still united them. By its very construction, the careful listener must put himself in the position of the other. For example, Lincoln did not say, ‘Those from the North and the South read the same Bible, and pray to the same God.’ His use of the word ‘both’ forces the listener to look into the heart of his opponent” (Shogan, 2009, p. 865). Lincoln shows in his speech that both the North and the South are equal in God’s eyes by the common thread of the Bible.

**Conclusion**

Humility, empathy and servant leadership are all linked together. In order for a leader to be able to lead, he/she must know the issues that plague the followers, thereby exercising humility and exhibiting empathy with those followers. With respect to the U.S. presidency, Abraham Lincoln understood his constituents by empathizing with them. “Lincoln is the true hero of this examination because he displayed an almost uncanny ability to master empathy. Instead of allowing his emotions to control him, Lincoln utilized empathy to help him predict the behavior of his opponents. His willingness to see the world from another’s viewpoint also enabled him to figure out ways in which he could convert enemies into allies. Lincoln’s capacity for empathy was probably innate, yet the political benefits he culled from it are worthy of attention and analysis” (Shogan, 2009, p. 875). Future studies of other leaders should be conducted in order to test the theoretical model further.
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SLTP. 2(1), 95-101
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