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

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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

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.

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

(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

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

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-Is 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.

OCB	Demonstrated as
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.)
Defending	*OCB-O:* When the work I perform is rewarding in ways that far exceed the compensation I receive.
Empowering	*OCB-O:* When leadership means serving our community.
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.
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.

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.

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

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.

Proactive Leadership Items	*Passive Leadership Items*
1. Those who follow realize that organizational leaders are open to suggestions they can offer.	1. When one is following, he/she does not have to worry about being involved in decision-making.
2. Those who follow still communicate their opinions, even though they know leaders may disagree.	2. At the end of the day, those who follow leaders cannot be held accountable for the performance of the organization.
3. As part of their role, those who follow are willing to challenge supervisors' assumptions.	3. Those who follow leaders do not have to take on much responsibility for thinking about how things get done.
4. Those who follow proactively identify problems that could affect the organization.	4. Not being a leader means that you don't have to think about changing the way work gets done.
5. Those who follow should be proactive in thinking about things that could go wrong.	
6. Those who follow are also leaders and this is essential to getting work done.	
7. Those who follow share responsibilities similar to those of the top leadership.	

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.

Org. Level	n	%	Age	n	%	Sex	n	%
Dispatcher/ Call-taker	297	46.1	< 20	0	0	Male	235	36.5
Dispatcher	63	9.8	20-29	114	17.7	Female	409	63.5
Shift supervisor	70	10.9	30-39	175	27.2			
Support Staff	56	8.7	40-49	204	31.7			
Middle management	54	8.4	50-64	147	22.8			
Director	49	7.6	65+	2	.3			
Training Coordinator	33	5.1	CBR*	2	.3			
Professional/ Technical	20	3.1						
Other Job	2	.3						
Totals	644	100		644	100		644	100

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 6. Servant Leadership Mean Scores (compared to mid-point of 2.5).

Dimension	N	Mean Score	Std. Dev.	Std. Error
Interpersonal Support	644	2.76	.86	.03
Building Community	644	2.90	.85	.03
Altruism	644	2.89	.82	.03
Egalitarianism	644	2.78	.86	.03
Moral Integrity	644	3.12	.79	.03
Servant Leader Composite	644	2.81	.73	.03

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 sores 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).

Followership	N	Mean Score	Std. Dev.	Std. Error
Passive	644	2.02	.54	.02
Proactive	644	1.41	.32	.01

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.

	1	2	3	4
1. Servant Leader	–			
2. Passive Follower	-.16**	–		
3. Proactive Follower	.96**	.08	–	
4. Org. Citizen Behaviors	.42**	-.21**	.36**	–

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.

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