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Servant Leadership and the Wellbeing of Police Officers: A Case Study

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Abstract

This qualitative single case study set forth to discover how working for an identified servant leadership law enforcement agency influenced the wellbeing of police officers. The study took place in a police department located in the Southwestern United States. The department involved in this study had openly adopted the servant leadership philosophy and their executive leaders have been publicly identified as servant leaders. The purpose of the study was to discover how members of the police department understand their own wellbeing as a result of being a member of an identified servant leadership agency. The results of the study support the position that serving with a servant leadership law enforcement agency positively influences the wellbeing of officers. The study's implication is that it strengthens the argument for infusing servant leadership into law enforcement organizations as a way to improve the health and wellbeing of officers and the communities they serve.

Keywords: Servant Leadership, Police Officers, Law Enforcement, Wellbeing

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to discover how police officers serving with an identified servant leadership law enforcement agency understand the leaders' influence on their wellbeing. The researchers identified the specific agency through direct observation and interaction with command staff personnel. The department studied in this inquiry had openly adopted the servant leadership philosophy as their approach towards both organizational leadership and community policing. The agency's policies and procedures incorporated the tenants of servant leadership philosophy. The command staff, midlevel, and non-ranking officers actively take part in outside servant leadership training and education courses. Furthermore, the police officers are trained in the philosophy as part of their in-service training. Moreover, the chief of department is an invited national and international speaker on the topic of servant leadership in policing.

The goal of this research was to identify a leadership approach within policing that could foster wellbeing among those who serve in law enforcement careers (Gilmartin, 2002). The central question guiding this study asked how serving with an identified servant leadership police department, from the officers' perspectives, influenced the wellbeing of uniformed and sworn police officers. The researchers began by observing the department, interacting with the chief of police, and reviewing literature pertaining to its policies and procedures. The researchers then sent a survey to the department's police chief for dissemination. The researchers chose to have the chief's office forward the recruitment email out of respect for their command.

Because the study took place at a specific pre-identified police department, the researchers worked to minimize selection bias by ensuring that the survey was sent to every member of the organization and participation was both random and anonymous (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). If an individual member of the department both agreed to take and completed the survey, they became a participant in the study. The end result was N = 9 uniformed and sworn police officers serving with this department agreeing to be a part of the study and completed the entire survey.

The reasons the researchers chose to focus on servant leadership had to do with the philosophy's promise of overcoming toxicity, building community, and healing wounds (Greenleaf, 1977/2002; Russell, 2016; Spears, 2010). A career in law enforcement is one of high-stress and public scrutiny (Ellrich, 2016; Paton, Violanti, Dunning, & Smith, 2004; Wender, 2008). Community policing is unlike other public services because the officer has to navigate both the trauma of the work and the unique stresses afflicting the profession (Sheehan & Van Hasselt, 2003; Yuan et al., 2011). The role of law enforcement is one that can put the officer at odds with the opinions and feelings of the citizens they serve (Cordner, 2016). The relationship between the officers and citizenry is, at times, seemingly one of ambivalence at best (Bonifacio, 1991). Therefore, it seems that the goal of law enforcement administration needs to be one of building a safe workplace climate that can strengthen and heal police officers; a place where officers can come off

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point and let down their guard (Kirschman, 2006; Paton, 2005; Paton et al., 2004). Thus the need to better understand the promise servant leadership may have for law enforcement.

This study took place at a municipal police department located in the Southwest United States. The department serves a suburban municipality of 50,000 residents. The agency's median base salary for a police officer is \$70,000.00, exceeding the national median police officer salary of \$61,600.00 by 12% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). In addition, the department offers an extensive benefits package including paid medical coverage, retirement, college-incentive pay, advanced certification pay, holiday pay, and medical incentive pay equaling \$9,000.00 annually. Thus, the material support for these officers alone, serves to lower their financial strains at home.

The researchers chose to use a qualitative methodology for this study based upon its ability to ascertain an understanding that comes directly from the experiences of the study's participants (Camic, Rhodes, & Yardley, 2003). Moreover, as Winston (2010) noted, servant leadership research needs more qualitative studies in order to evaluate the influence the philosophy has on individuals and organizations. Because the goal of the research was to discover how servant leadership influenced the wellbeing of officers within a single department, the researchers decided to use a qualitative single case study design (Yin, 2013).

The article moves on to discuss the literature that formed this study. Following the literature review, the researchers identify the research methodology and the case study protocols used to discover the study's convergent line of inquiry (Yin, 2013). Then, the researchers present the results of the data analysis and provide a discussion between the findings of the research and the literature. The article concludes by discussing the implications and limitations of the study, and offers some suggestions for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review presents the works that became the foundation of the study as well as the conceptual basis for the research questionnaire content. The philosophy of servant leadership is described and explained from its inception to its subsequent empirical support demonstrated in research. Further, the literature review illuminates empirical works pertaining to the importance of mental, emotional, and physical health within law enforcement. The review of the literature concludes with a discussion surrounding how important building community within police departments is for the holistic wellness of its officers. Particularly, those officers that work in the streets of community and whose quality of service to its citizens depends upon their psychophysical capacity and resilience.

An Introduction to Modern Servant Leadership

Robert K. Greenleaf conceptualized the modern philosophy of servant leadership in 1970. In his seminal work *The Servant as Leader*, Greenleaf (1970) put forth what he saw as a cure for the toxic behaviors that plague organizations. Greenleaf envisioned an approach towards leadership that involved individuals being in service to others, not in a position of servitude, but rather, that of a servant leader (Greenleaf, 1970).

From his decades of corporate experience, Greenleaf realized that individual needs must be met in order for greatness to occur (Frick, 2004). The servant leader comes to the philosophy with a belief that service to others, stemming from moral love, leads to realizing the full potential of one's followers. Greenleaf's (1977/2002) most quoted words regarding the philosophy states,

Servant leadership begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. He is sharply different from the person who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions. For such it will be a later choice to serve after leadership is established. The leader first and the servant first are two extreme types. Between them, there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature (p. 27).

This philosophical approach towards leadership begins with three pragmatic questions, the first asks, "Do those served grow as persons" (Greenleaf, 1977/2002, p. 27)? This question involves their growth as individuals. Under one's leadership is one's people better tomorrow than they were yesterday? Are they transcending the role of followership and being made ready to take on new challenges and opportunities?

The second asks, "Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants" (Greenleaf, 1977/2002, p. 27)? The second involves the follower growing both independent and in their capability to become a leader. It means followers reach a point where they can work without direct supervision. It's about follower's being ready for empowerment and delegation of authority. It's about molding them into servant leaders, so as to be ready for future leadership opportunities.

The third question asks, "What is the effect on the least privileged in society, will they benefit or at least not be further deprived" (Greenleaf, 1977/2002, p. 27)? The third question has to do with those on the bottom rungs of the socioeconomic and organizational ladders. Leadership decisions impact these people the most.

The three pragmatic questions therefore, subsequently imply the question of the overall goal of policing. Historically, police have self-justified its existence

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and functions in terms of crime control and peacekeeping. However, Manning (2011) suggests that the aim of the police might be the overall lifestyle improvement for all in the community. By taking a rehabilitative approach to policing, community safety would improve by the cultivation of its citizens, increased sense of liberty, and deprivation reduction at lower socioeconomic levels. The goal of the police is community improvement rather than problem solving (Manning, 2011). This concept of policing is seemingly in line with servant leadership philosophy.

Verified findings from countless studies typically display a positive correlation between the practice of servant leadership and organizational success (Autry, 2001; Keith, 2008; Sipe & Frick, 2009; van Dierendonck, 2011). In addition, where servant leadership is practiced and supported, leaders find themselves gifted with a legitimate power that only comes from followers loving and trusting them (Greenleaf, 1996; Blanchard, 1999; Hunter, 2004).

Over time, as Greenleaf's philosophy took hold, more individuals stepped forward to think, write, and research the paradigm. Certain works involving the characteristics, constructs, and attributes regarding a servant leader emerged. Besides the work of Greenleaf and many other authors and researcher, two essential works, one from Larry Spears and one from Kathleen Patterson contributed to form the philosophy's theoretical foundations.

Spears (2010) identified specific characteristics relating to the servant leader. Though Spear's list was in no way exhausted, the identified key characteristics are found to be common in servant leaders across all sectors and spectrums. His identified characteristics are listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community (Spears, 2010).

Second, involves Patterson's (2003), discovery of the virtuous constructs of the philosophy identified within Greenleaf's writings. Patterson's (2003) discovery is known as the seven virtuous constructs of servant leadership. The constructs are *agapao* love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service (Patterson, 2003).

The purpose of this study was to understand the influence the philosophy can have on the wellbeing of police officers. The writings of Greenleaf (1970), Spears (2010), and Patterson (2003) are the essential components that formed this study and sparked the researchers asking how servant leadership improved the lives of police officers. In addition, the literature helped shape the research questionnaire that was distributed to the participants.

Servant Leadership in Law Enforcement

Leadership within law enforcement agencies is a complex and difficult undertaking (Baker, 2011). Law enforcement leadership is a multifaceted role that involves leading the rank-and-file serving within the agency, leading on incidents in the command-and-control position, and leading policing efforts within communities (Russell, 2016). Each of these roles contain unique challenges, yet they all have one thing in common, people (Mirchell & Casey, 2007).

In each setting, people are the core concern; however, there are processes and procedures that need tending. Therefore, there is a need to create a distinction between bureaucratic tasks and functions, needing to be managed, and the people at every level needing leadership (Cordner, 2016; Iannone, Iannone, & Bernstein, 2013). The law enforcement leader needs to be aware that processes and procedures are managed; people are led (Russell, 2016).

Understanding the need to serve and lead people seemingly is key to successful law enforcement leadership (Barker, 2017). Because law enforcement is people-centric, it is possible that infusing the philosophy of servant leadership into law enforcement can promote and overcome the barriers and pitfalls associated with toxic leadership practices. The promise servant leadership holds for law enforcement is the commonality between the foundation of the philosophy and what brings individuals to a career in policing; a desire to serve (Moonsbrugger & Patton, 2008; Russell, 2016).

Mental and Emotional Health in Police Officers

Seemingly, one of the greatest challenges to being a police officer is the mental and emotional strain that comes from this type of work (Paton, 2005; Perez, Jones, Englert, & Sachau, 2010; Santa Maria et al., 2017). As it is with other emergency services occupations, police officers become active players in the tragedies and losses of others (Russell, 2016). However, unlike firefighters and emergency medical technicians, law enforcement officers navigate suffering and enforce laws under scrutiny (Sheehan & Van Hasselt, 2003). This has to do with many in society putting police in an “other” category, thus creating a situation of us versus them (Wender, 2008). Again, unlike other emergency services professions, law enforcement is often times viewed as adversaries and not allies in many communities (Sheehan & Van Hasselt, 2003). For the law enforcement officer, this leads to mental stress and occasionally burnout (Ellrich, 2016; Yuan et al., 2011).

To understand the mental impact of police work, one must first acknowledge the emotion toll the job takes on the individual officer (Gilmartin, 2002). The stress individual officers face come in many forms; however, there are several common stressors that impact a majority of officers. The first involves navigating the laws, bureaucracy and issues facing the criminal justice system

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(Kirschman, 2006). The individual officer is seemingly powerless when it comes to the destructive and inhuman bureaucratic milieu (Russell, 2016). The second, as discussed earlier, is the social practice of keeping officers at arm's length and not seeing them as fellow citizens and allies (Wender, 2008). The third involves facing the horrors and cruelty certain individuals are capable of within society (Perez et al., 2010; Sheehan et al., 2003).

Each of these stressors leads to officer burnout and mental health issues. It needs noting, that the tragedy and loss is part of the human experience; the nature of police work ensures officers will deal with traumatic experiences (Russell, 2016). However, the experiences do not need to be so psychologically impactful, if leadership within the profession work to both minimize the bureaucratic stressors and strengthen the posttraumatic growth of officers (Paton, 2005). Two actions law enforcement leadership can take to improve the lives of officers involves a commitment to physical fitness (Hancock, 2017; Suminski, 2006) and building a community of officers that allows an environment where individuals can come off point, have a healthy dialogue, and feel both welcome and safe (Russell, 2016; Wolfe, Rojek, Manjarrez, & Rojek, 2017).

The Importance of Physical Fitness in Law Enforcement

There seems to be a correlation between physical fitness and the overall wellbeing of police officers (Bissett, Bissett, & Snell, 2012; Boni, 2004). Specifically, that physical fitness positively influences both the physical and mental health of those involved in police work (Bissett et al., 2012). Though the concept of physical fitness and its relation to wellness is not new. Time dedicated to wellness is often redirected within law enforcement so that officers can accomplish mundane and bureaucratic tasks (Chism, 2016). It is possible that the problem is in a common belief that physical fitness is a sort of luxury to be taken advantage of only when other chores and responsibilities are completed (Suminski, 2006). However, *physical fitness* means the psychophysical capacity and capability of the person-in-action, not just the adequate performance of tasks and procedures required by the job in a typical day. The greater one's capacity and capability, the more "in reserve" he or she has to bounce back from the extraordinary stresses and impacts of police work.

The research shows that the more physically fit an officer is, the less likely they are to sustain injuries and need long-term leave (Hancock, 2017; Suminski, 2006). In addition, the more physically fit an officer is, the more resilient they are when dealing with the traumas that come as a result of police work (Boni, 2004; Paton, 2005). Therefore, it needs to be made clear that officer's wellbeing is not improved by mundane daily tasks, but rather, by taking part in physical fitness and exercise, as well as having proper nutrition (Hancock, 2017).

For the governmental body employing police officers in a community, there is a tangible benefit received from the time and money dedicated to officer

wellness. The more healthy officers are, the better they are at policing overall. Additionally, there is a direct benefit to the posttraumatic growth (PTG) that comes from having physically fit officers who are consuming healthy diets and receiving proper rest and rehabilitation (Paton, 2005; Suminski, 2006). This benefit is derived from officers growing physically stronger, thus becoming more efficient and effective at serving the needs of the community (Boni, 2004).

Building a Community of Responders

The role of the law enforcement officer is one that functions and operates under stress within dangerous situations (Trinker, Tyler, & Goff, 2016). As noted earlier, the work is taxing on the mental, physical, and emotional health of those that serve in the profession. Therefore, officers need a space that is safe and accepting of them, an intentional and supported community away from the chaos where they can let down their armor and come off point (Russell, 2016). This is the community of responders, a place where they can belong, heal, and grow (Russell, 2016).

Beyond operations, officers experience stress and burnout from the organizational bureaucracy they must navigate within their respective agencies (Kirschman, 2006; Wolfe et al., 2017). This bureaucracy creates organizational climates where officers cannot feel safe to be the person beyond the badge and be open about their feelings (Russell, 2016; Tinker et al., 2016). In this environment, officers are psychologically under the promotional and opportunity microscope, focused more on how they are being judged by their peers and leaders (Barker, 2017; Tinker et al., 2016; Wolfe et al., 2017).

This socially supportive community is vital for the overall wellbeing of officers and their psychophysical resilience. It matters because officers that exist in a “cycle of surviving” cannot effectively perform their duties to the communities they are sworn to protect and serve. Police leadership has a responsibility to recognize the importance of fostering this community of responders. Moreover, leaders must actively work towards removing the toxic barriers and pitfalls associated with bureaucracy so that officers can heal and thrive (Kirschman, 2006; Russell, 2016; Wolfe et al., 2017).

METHOD

To conduct the study, the researchers developed an open-ended questionnaire to be completed by the participants. To protect the participants in this study, the research project, recruitment materials, and the questionnaire was approved by the researchers' University Institutional Review Board. The questionnaire did not collect nor ask any identifiable/personal information about the participants. The participants were asked to complete the questionnaire on their own and participation in the study took no more than 10 minutes.

Works identified in the literature review were used to construct the study questionnaire. To test the veracity of the questionnaire, the researchers sought

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permission and conducted a pilot study with a professional fire department (Babbie, 2010). The literature was the basis for the questionnaire's content and concept validity. By studying officers in the field and using an open-ended questionnaire to seek textual responses, the researchers sought to evaluate the ecological validity of servant leadership practices in a police agency. The pilot study allowed the questionnaire to be edited and refined, resulting in a rich and meaningful questionnaire (Babbie, 2010).

The setting of this research study was a police department located in the Southwest United States. The population used in this study consisted of $N = 9$ uniformed and sworn law enforcement officers serving with the department; see Table 1. To determine the sample size the researchers used a purposeful sampling method to choose the participants for the study, specifically a type of purposeful sampling known as expert sampling (Patton, 2002). The justification for using the purposeful-expert sampling process is it allowed for theoretical discovery involving data collection and analysis from pre-selected specific experts; in this case, uniformed and sworn police officers serving with a specific agency (Patton, 2002).

Table 1
The Participants of the Study

Participant	Rank	Years of Service	Gender Identity	Age
Participant 1	Mid-Level Officer	21 or more years	Male	48-less than 64
Participant 2	Junior Officer	11 to 20 years	Male	38-less than 48
Participant 3	Junior Officer	11 to 20 years	Male	28 or less than 38
Participant 4	Police Officer	1 to 10 years	Male	38-less than 48
Participant 5	Mid-Level Officer	21 or more years	Male	38-less than 48
Participant 6	Junior Officer	21 or more years	Male	48-less than 64
Participant 7	Police Officer	1 to 10 years	Male	28 or less than 38
Participant 8	Police Officer	21 or more years	Male	48-less than 64
Participant 9	Police Officer	11 to 20 year	Male	38-less than 48

To construct this case study, the researchers used a pattern matching analytic technique based upon the responses of the study's participants (Yin, 2013). As mentioned earlier, protection and anonymity of the study participants was paramount. To confirm validity, the researchers' triangulated data sources from multiple participants, had another researcher conduct an analysis for comparison, and present the data as in-depth descriptions. To ensure data reliability, the researchers followed specific case study protocols and established a secure database for data storage (Yin, 2013).

To analyze the data the researchers developed case descriptions utilizing a systematic, hierarchical approach (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2013). The data analysis began with the researchers organizing and preparing the data for analysis, removing any personal identifiers of each of the participants to protect their anonymity, and then reading the transcribed questionnaires to become familiar with the data. Each participant was assigned a P and then a corresponding number. To analyze the data, the researchers used a hand-coding process that involved color-coding the data (Basit, 2003). The hand-coding process allowed researchers to spend a lot of time reading and rereading the data, color-coding different attributes and writing notes and ideas down (Basit, 2003; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Using inductive reasoning, propositions were generated from the findings and reported in the discussion (Coyne, 1984; Yin, 2013). To present the findings in the results section, the researchers developed narrative case descriptions based upon the emergent themes in order to display and interpret the findings (Yin, 2013).

RESULTS

The results of the study converged to answer the central question guiding this research and from the data analysis 4 themes emerged, see Table 2. As noted in the introduction of this article, the question asked how serving with an identified servant leadership police department influenced the wellbeing of uniformed and sworn police officers.

Table 2
The Study Themes and Descriptions

Theme	Description
Theme 1	The servant leadership agency offers opportunities for the growth of officers.
Theme 2	The servant leadership agency is committed to the mental and emotional health of officers.
Theme 3	The servant leadership agency promotes officer physical fitness and healthy living.
Theme 4	The servant leadership agency builds a culture of belonging.

The results section of this work presents the themes as narrative case descriptions formulated in the words of the participants. The case descriptions spotlight the study's findings. As noted in the methodology section of this work, the narrative case descriptions allow for a rich presentation of the themes directly from the writings of the study's participants (Yin, 2009).

The servant leadership agency offers opportunities for the growth of officers. P1 stated, "Opportunities are always present. Whether it is for individual, emotional growth or organizational growth" (P1). However, P2 added, "We are a smaller agency so promotional opportunities are relatively few and far in between however lateral moves into different divisions helps break up becoming stagnant"

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(P2). P3 added to this stating, "Fair but rarely happen just because of the size of the department openings don't happen often" (P3). P3 went on to say, "My wellbeing seems to be one of the main priorities" (P3).

P7 noted that, "There are opportunities which benefit both the individual and department" (P7). P6 stated, "Multiple opportunities are provided, I believe our city is committed to the overall wellbeing of all employees" (P6). As did P8 who said, "The department encourages professional growth by providing training and encouraging employees to participate in promotional processes" (P8). P5 elaborated on this stating, "I believe we have a positive outlook on the wellbeing of our officers as a total person. We talk frequently about "being the best version" of yourself which incorporates physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional wellbeing" (P5).

Discussing opportunities for growth, P4 said, "My department gives our employees the opportunity to take classes, get degrees, so we can promote in the future" (P4). Two of the participants noted that though the opportunities are there, it is up to the individual to pursue them. For example, P9 stated, "I would admit that if you are willing to succeed, then the department is willing to give you the tools to do so" (P9). P9 added, "The organization gives opportunity and resources in order for responders to be successful" (P9). P5 added this point, "There are ample opportunities for professional growth within our organization. It is up to the individual to pursue them. Encouragement and support are provided for these opportunities to be utilized" (P5).

Therefore, the researchers draw the conclusion that the officers do not see promotion upward in the hierarchy as "success" or "progress" in the traditional bureaucratic way of thinking. Moreover, "growth" is not "bigger is better" but rather a holistic developmental cultivation model of refinement through new work experiences. Traditionally, "experience" is a term used by police to mean years on the job. However, the participants identify that experiences of various social and job-related kinds are needed to continue the growth of each officer and the organization altogether.

The servant leadership agency is committed to the mental and emotional health of officers. P9 wrote, "The department takes good care and is interested in the wellbeing of its members" (P9). P3 affirmed this saying, "The department is very caring and true. If ever a hard time with family comes up the department is quick to meet the needs of the officer" (P3). When discussing mental and emotional wellness in the department, P1 stated, "We encourage our officers to be whole in body, spirit and mind. We encourage our employees to be on the lookout for one another and ask questions if someone is not acting themselves" (P1). P1 added, "Each supervisor is responsible for the total wellbeing of their direct reports. We have to stay in tune with how each other thinks and acts and follow up if we know someone is not acting themselves" (P1).

Discussing access to mental wellness services, P2 stated, "The department offers a confidential employee assistant program and is a family first organization" (P2). P4 reiterated this saying, "If we have an issue we have an open door policy and we can see a professional to address any issues" (P4). P5 noted that,

"The department provides medical services that are utilized frequently by staff members. It is harder to gauge how much/often mental health services are utilized since the participants usually keep that confidential. In the case of a critical incident, we would bring in counseling assistance for the staff" (P5).

P6 added to this, "The city offers counseling as part of our wellness package" (P6). P7 also noted these services saying, "Troubled officers get the attention they need to deal with issues. Officers have the opportunity to speak with someone if needed. The City educates their employees yearly regarding their health benefits and what resources are available for the officer/employee" (P7). As did P8 who added, "The department and city government provide counseling and mental health services for all employees. Employees are not looked down upon for taking advantage of these services" (P8).

Therefore, the researchers draw the conclusion that the officers do not see mental and emotional health and wellness encapsulated in the medical or disease model. Rather, it is shown here that the servant leadership ethos encourages a more natural and social supportive approach to officer wellness rather than simply sending one to a mental health professional. Mental and emotional wellness is comprehensive for the servant leader law enforcement agency.

The servant leadership agency promotes officer physical fitness and healthy living. P2 stated, "The department has created a Physical Fitness program and recognizes its importance" (P2). P2 continued, "The department and city offer several programs that would allow anyone interested in more information on becoming physically fit the resources needed" (P2). P1 added, "We are currently working hard on establishing a strong and fair physical fitness policy. We currently allow all officers to work out during their work day and our city has a fairly comprehensive wellness program" (P1). P5 added to this stating,

"The organization (City) as a whole promotes physical fitness and healthy living through a variety of programs. We are in the process of vetting and establishing criteria for a PT test and standards for our officers and applicants" (P5).

P6 noted that within the department, "Physical fitness is offered and encouraged" (P6). P4 added to this saying, "We are given an hour on each shift to workout and get paid for it" (P4). P3 noted that the department is, "Very devoted and driven to ensure we stay fit" (P3). When discussing physical fitness, P9 stated, "It is an important aspect of the job, and therefore the attitude is positive" (P9). P8 addressed the importance of physical fitness saying, "The department is committed but the department can only offer so much, personal responsibility is a must" (P8).

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P8 went on to say, "The department wants its people to be healthy" (P8). P7 addressed a financial incentive for physical wellness stating, "Get in shape or more money will be taken out of your paycheck. If you smoke or use tobacco, more money will be deducted from your paycheck. If high blood pressure or high cholesterol runs in your family and you have the same issues, get it under control or more money will be taken out of your paycheck" (P7).

Therefore, the conclusion can be drawn from the data that the leadership of this police agency looks beyond one's ability to merely function as an officer in terms of job knowledge, skills, and abilities. Rather, physical fitness is about supporting the interrelatedness of physical and psychological health and wellness. Moreover, by taking a positive approach to physical fitness the citizens of the community may be indirectly benefitting by getting better service. One might see the financial and time support of the leaders, pertaining to the officers' fitness practices, as evidence that the community's policy makers are supporting the efforts. Police departments that have conflict with their citizens do not typically enjoy such support for their health and wellness (Boni, 2004). Therefore, one might consider that healthier and more positive officers provide more quality citizen interactions which doubles back on them in the form of community support (Boni, 2004).

The servant leadership agency builds a culture of belonging. P1 said that the department is committed to, "Building relationships throughout our organization" (P1). P2 noted that as a department, "We are small enough where everyone knows each other and hosts a few events every year to try and get as many employee's as possible together. Whether it is a holiday luncheon or the annual awards banquet" (P2). P3 added to this stating, "Makes it feel like a family environment. Leaders listen to their employees and will still get out and work with them" (P3). P4 added to this stating, "Communication is the key and if we have anything that needs to be addressed we can go to our supervisors" (P4). P4 continued, "Family comes first and our department has no problem making sure we are taken care off" (P4). P6 stated that, "Through transparency and team building the department tries to enhance our sense of belonging to the organization and the culture" (P6). In addition, as P5 noted, "We try to make the reasons why decisions were made transparent to the organization when possible so that everyone understands why certain decisions were made" (P5). P5 went on to say, "We try to be inclusive of new employees when they are brought into the team. We also celebrate our successes when a person or group does well" (P5).

P9 noted, "The organization has strong family values and treats employees as equal parts of the overall equation" (P9). P8 added to this stating, "The organization that I belong to is committed to building a culture of belonging and even family" (P8). According to P7, "The organizational culture allows for the friendships and bonds officers create with each other which creates a strong sense of belonging" (P7). P7 elaborated, "The organization wants the officers to be safe, protect the community, one another, and don't violate anyone's rights. The talk of

the department is family first" (P7).

Therefore, servant leadership fosters a sense of kinship among the organization rather than one of "just business." The participants describe a personal investment in each other and a general sense of group responsibility for organizational performance. This is very opposite from the meritocratic rewarding for successes or scapegoating a member to seemingly solve a problem. Servant leadership sustains an organization through a genuine valuing everyone in the group and their contributions toward the organizational mission and goals.

DISCUSSION

The discussion section of this article converges the results of the study with the works that shaped the research. The researchers utilized inductive reasoning to discuss the research findings as they relate to the literature (Coyne, 1984; Yin, 2013). Each theme is delineated upon in order to show how the servant leadership law enforcement agency influences the wellbeing of police officers. In addition, the discussion offers a snapshot of the benefits derived from infusing servant leadership philosophy into the law enforcement career field.

The first emergent theme was *the servant leadership agency offers opportunities for the growth of officers*. The results of this study seem to reveal that officers serving with a servant leadership organization recognize that they work for an agency that is committed to their growth. This finding relates to the philosophy of servant leadership, whereas being committed to the growth of individuals is an identified characteristic of the servant leader (Spears, 2010). Growth matters to police officers because personal growth and achievement improves the overall health and wellbeing of responders, thus fostering posttraumatic growth (Paton 2005). In addition, as officers grow as persons and experience achievement due to having their needs met, then they themselves are more likely to become servant leaders in the future (Greenleaf, 1977/2002). It also needs noting that several of the participants in this study identified that some opportunities are limited due to the size of their organization. Paton (2006) points out that some of the predictors of PTSD in emergency workers are apathy, cynicism, and high self-centeredness. The results of this study show that police officers can be buffered from these through being encouraged to grow through variety and meaningful work assignments.

The second emergent theme was *the servant leadership agency is committed to the mental and emotional health of officers*. The results of this study seem to show that officers working for a servant leadership agency recognize mental and emotional support from their leadership. This finding is important because the job of policing is one that takes its toll on the mental and emotional wellbeing of officers (Paton, 2005; Perez et al., 2010; Santa Maria et al., 2017). The nature of police work guarantees officers have to become active players in the tragedies and losses of others (Russell, 2016). Therefore, leadership within the policing professions needs to ensure that they are meeting the mental and emotional needs of officers.

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The third emergent theme was *the servant leadership agency promotes officer physical fitness and healthy living*. This research finding discovered that the officers serving with a servant leadership police department express a commitment to their physical fitness and healthy living. The participants noted that the servant leadership agency offers opportunities and programs that foster wellness. The literature revealed that the physically fit officer experiences wellness and resiliency in the face of trauma and stress (Boni, 2004; Hancock, 2017; Suminski, 2006). Such wellness and resiliency reduces the costs associated with mental health and reduces problems between officers and the community (Boni, 2004). In addition, physical wellness seems to be correlated to PTG because of a strengthening of the mind-body relationship (Paton, 2005). Paton (2006) elsewhere indicates that some strong predictors of PTG in emergency workers are *personal factors* of resilience. That is, the psychosocial and physical wellbeing of the responder before participating in a traumatizing event predicts the development of PTG rather than PTSD. Therefore, a law enforcement agency that decides to champion and support physical wellness programs will potentially save money, retain healthy officers, and realize effective community policing. Moreover, instances of officer misconduct, substance abuse problems, and suicide may be better avoided by such “preventative medicine.”

The fourth emergent theme was *the servant leadership agency builds a culture of belonging*. The research revealed that the participants in this study felt as if they were a part of a family not simply an organization. This recognizing of a community of belonging and multiple participants use of the word *family* seems to show that the servant leadership organization is committed to building community among officers (Spears, 2010). This community is a safe-space and a place of belonging, one where officers can let down their guard and feel accepted (Barker, 2017; Tinker et al., 2016; Wolfe et al., 2017). As it is with personal growth, mental health, and physical wellness, building a healthy community strengthens officers by giving in them a place to belong (Russell, 2016). Another predictor of PTG is the degree and quality of social support the officers have in the aftermath of a critical incident (Paton, 2006). The kinship milieu that the participants describe is the kind that fosters healing and resiliency in emergency and crisis workers.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to discover the influence servant leadership had on the wellbeing of police officers. The research findings seem to reveal positive benefits relating to police officer growth, mental and emotional health, physical wellbeing, and a healthy community of belonging. The strength of case study research is the ability to analytically generalize from the study’s findings (Yin, 2013). In this study, the research focused on police officers within a single organization; however, due to the nature of police work, there are shared common traits, roles, and responsibilities among officer throughout most law enforcement agencies (Russell, 2016). Therefore, it is possible that the findings of this single case study allow for an analytical generalization that working for a servant

leadership law enforcement agency has a positive influence on police officers (Kennedy, 1979).

The implication of the study is that the practice of servant leadership is a viable leadership approach within law enforcement agencies, one that benefits officers, the organization, and the communities they serve. This benefit in part has to do with the philosophy's potential for reducing posttraumatic stress and adverse psychological effects associated with current police leadership practices (Greenleaf, 1977/2002; Paton, 2005). Therefore, ascertaining the influence servant leadership has on the wellbeing of responders strengthens the argument for infusing the philosophy into the uniformed professions. Moreover, it seems that when servant leadership can foster PTG, which provides its officers with greater overall strength, capacity, and capability to better serve their citizens. The community relations benefits seem very promising when police come to the work with a desire to serve rather than a goal to command and control crime. That is not to say community protection is not achieved, but rather, better community-oriented policing enhances public safety.

The limitation of this study involves focusing on a single police department that was identified as a servant leadership organization. The researchers acknowledge that this can create a possibility of selection bias (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). Therefore, future research is needed that looks at multiple departments of different sizes, in different geographical areas. Future research is also needed to compare the influence of working for a non-servant leadership agency versus a servant leadership organization. In addition, future quantitative research is needed to discover whether a correlation exists between perceptions of servant leadership and police officer wellbeing.

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