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Servant Leadership in Christian Schools: A Case Study

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SERVANT LEADERSHIP IN CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS:

A CASE STUDY

by

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ABSTRACT

This study used a biblical leadership theory theoretical lens and a qualitative single-case study design to investigate servant leadership in a Christian school. Data were collected from (a) 33 participants via interviews, (b) eight field observations, and (c) documents, and the data were analyzed using thematic coding via MAXQDA. I found that service was perceived as a fundamental component of a dual-domain paradigm of leadership consisting of a technical and a spiritual domain, and I found that descriptions of service as part of leadership included (a) motivations for service, (b) dispositions associated with serving, (c) acts of service, and (d) effects of being served. I developed a conceptual model to describe these findings and described implications of the model for practitioners in Christian schools, including using the model to inform (a) revisions to mission and vision statements, (b) professional development, and (c) student instruction in leadership. Additionally, I noted that practitioners in Christian schools could use the findings (a) to inform internal studies of spiritual development among staff and students and (b) to understand the complementary relationship between spiritual and technical domains of leadership. I proposed that future research could focus on (a) determining the degree to which Christlike leadership is espoused in Christian schools, (b) developing a comprehensive framework for Christlike leadership, (c) testing my conceptual model in other Christian schools, (d) studying Christian leadership paradigms using a grounded theory approach, and (e) studying the prevalence of and nature of a dual-domain paradigm of leadership in Christian schools.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

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As I reflect on the process of completing this project, I find myself grateful for a "village" of individuals who played a role in my progress. First, I thank the Lord for setting me on this path and inspiring the topic

To all the individuals who participated in this study: Thank you so much for allowing me to study at your school, for so eagerly providing me with all that I needed, and for making time in your busy schedules to sit and talk with me. This study would not have been possible without your contributions, and my experiences with you all left me with the desire to continually pursue Christlikeness in my capacity as a leader. Thank you, thank you, thank you! of this study. Second, I thank my wife and son for their unwavering support and sacrifice. I love you both and look forward to having much more time to enjoy with you! Third, I thank our families, who continually affirmed me and encouraged me to persevere through the hardest moments of this process.

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with the desire to continually pursue Christlikeness in my capacity as a leader. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Context of the Problem

The Christian faith is characterized in part by an ardent focus on aligning one's thoughts, behaviors, habits, and practices with those modeled and prescribed in the biblical canon, which Christians regard as authoritative and divinely inspired (Blackaby et al., 2008; Bonhoeffer, 1954; *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*, 2001/2007, 2 Timothy 3:16, James 1:22-25). This practice extends into the leadership literature. Christian texts on leadership are informed by exegeses of the biblical canon (Bell, 2014; Blackaby et al., 2008; Reel, 2015; Wilkes, 1998) with a particular focus on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom Christians believe was (a) the son of God, (b) the savior of all mankind, and (c) the consummate model and teacher of holy and righteous living. Jesus's leadership style is commonly described as servant leadership, for Jesus and his Apostles taught that all Christians should be committed to a life of service first to God and then to others (*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*, 2001/2007, 1 Peter 4:10-11, Galatians 5:13, Mark 12:29-31, Matthew 22:36-40, Romans 12:9-13). Thus, the Christian leadership literature often designates servant leadership as an imperative (Bell, 2014; Blackaby et al., 2008; Reel, 2015; Wilkes, 1998).

Statement of the Problem and Justification

Although Jesus and his followers asserted service as a key component both of Christian practice and of Christian leadership (Patterson, 2014; *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version,* 2001/2007, 1 Peter 4:10-11, Mark 10:42-45, Matthew 22:39, Philippians 2:3-7; Wilkes, 1998), the authors of the biblical texts did not specifically denote attributes of servant leadership. Thus, Greenleaf's (1977/2002) servant leadership theory (SLT) has been used to describe the nature of servant leadership both among biblical characters, including Jesus, and among leaders of Christian organizations (Choi, 2014; Chung, 2011; Cincala & Chase, 2018; Locke, 2019; Shirin, 2014; Singfiel, 2018). However, the link between SLT and servant leadership in Christian contexts is not clear; the attributes of SLT do not perfectly align with biblical teaching on Christian praxis, nor do they perfectly align with the biblical record of Jesus' leadership (Locke, 2019).

Greenleaf (1977/2002) asserted that servant leaders were driven by a fundamental motive to serve the needs of others; this motive manifests in the other attributes associated with servant leaders. In contrast, Jesus instructed his followers to first and foremost commit themselves to serving God (*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version,* 2001/2007, Mark 12:28-20, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 22:35-38), and the Apostles Paul and Peter both asserted that Christians should do everything in fulfillment of their commitment to serving God (*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version,* 2001/2007, 1 Peter 4:1-2, 1 Peter 4:10-11, Colossians 3:17). For the Christian, service to God manifests in service to others (Wilkes, 1998), and the attributes of that service are delimited by biblical teaching. Thus, the distinctions between servant leadership in Christian

environments and servant leadership as defined by SLT begin at the most fundamental level.

Nonetheless, SLT has influenced inquiries into servant leadership attributes in Christian schools (Banke et al., 2012; Harrison & Allen, 2012; Martin, 2018; Striepe & O'Donoghue, 2014; Temperley, 2016). As a result, in studies of servant leadership in Christian schools where researchers found distinctly Christian attributes of servant leadership, they interpreted the attributes as aligned with SLT rather than as fundamental differences (Harrison & Allen, 2012; Striepe & O'Donoghue, 2014; Temperley, 2016). To understand servant leadership as perceived and practiced in Christian schools more fully, further inquiry is necessary. Examining the perceptions of Christian leaders on the nature of servant leadership from a biblical perspective, rather than an SLT perspective, will (a) provide a foundation upon which future inquiry can be developed, (b) help practitioners in Christian organizations understand the leadership qualities they may need to develop to advance in their careers, and (c) help leaders in Christian organizations develop professional growth opportunities for their followers in fulfillment of Jesus' instruction to make disciples of everyone (*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*, 2001/2007, Matthew 28:16-20).

Purpose of the Study

This study sought to examine the attributes of servant leadership as perceived, practiced, and taught by leaders in a Christian school. A qualitative case study design was used for this inquiry; this approach is intended to provide a holistic understanding of a complex phenomenon as experienced both by a researcher and by the participants (Patton, 2015; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). Previous inquiries into this phenomenon were

limited by a focus on the perceptions of the senior-most administrators (Banke et al., 2012; Harrison & Allen, 2012; Prior, 2018; Striepe & O'Donoghue, 2014; Temperley, 2016). In a school community, many stakeholders can both function as leaders and experience the leadership of others (Hughes & Pickeral, 2013; Lambert, 2002; Printy & Marks, 2010). Therefore, this study included participants who represented a variety of stakeholder perspectives as a means of attaining the most holistic understanding of servant leadership in that context.

Research Questions

The following research questions were developed to initially guide this inquiry:

RQ#1: How does servant leadership manifest in leadership training and leadership practice in a Christian school?

RQ#2: What are the stakeholders' perceptions of servant leadership attributes?

RQ#3: How do stakeholders perceive that servant leadership is being implemented in a Christian school?

RQ#4: How do stakeholders believe that servant leadership affects followers?

These questions were developed through a review of the literature before selecting a case.

Limitations

This study was designed to develop theoretical propositions regarding the distinct nature of servant leadership in a Christian school. Although these propositions might be applied in other Christian environments, the in-depth, context-specific nature of case studies presents a limitation regarding external generalizability. This design was not

intended to produce information that is representative of a broader context. Rather, this case study provides readers with an opportunity to extrapolate the findings to other cases, contemplating how the findings of this study might apply to those contexts (Patton, 2015; Stake, 1995). To maximize the potential for extrapolating the findings of the present study, the following design features were implemented:

- Thick description was utilized to communicate the context of the case, the participants, collected data, and findings (Patton, 2015; Stake, 1995).
- All processes regarding participant selection, data collection, methodological modifications, and data analysis were meticulously detailed to provide readers with an audit trail (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).
- Data triangulation, theoretical triangulation, methodological triangulation, member checking, and discrepant case analysis were implemented to strengthen the validity and reliability of the findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003).
- Researcher biases were thoroughly discussed to provide the reader with an understanding of how these might have affected decisions regarding methodology and data analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015).
- Recommendations for future inquiry were presented, including contexts in which replications of the present study may be appropriate.

Delimitations

This study was focused on understanding servant leadership as perceived and practiced by individuals in a Christian school with a particular focus on identifying

distinctive attributes of servant leadership in the Christian context. Therefore, it was imperative to ensure that the Christian school selected for study both grounded its mission, vision, and values in Christian beliefs and espoused servant leadership. To maximize the chance of selecting such a school, site selection was delimited by two criteria: (a) accreditation by the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), and (b) professed alignment with Schultz's (1998) principles of *kingdom education*. The rationale behind these delimitations is discussed in Chapter 3.

Additionally, to avoid the risk of influencing the participants' responses, thus introducing bias into the results, I designed the interview protocol with broad questions about leadership. As a result, there were data collected that extended beyond the focus of this study. To retain that focus, I delimited data analysis to focus only on ideas that were directly relevant to service.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Jesus Christ asserted service as a key practice for his followers (Atkinson, 2014; Patterson, 2014; *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*, 2001/2007, John 13:12-15, Mark 10:42-45, Matthew 20:25-28); Peter and the Apostle Paul, who established the early Christian church, reiterated service as imperative for both church laity and leaders (*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*, 2001/2007, 1 Peter 5:2-3, Acts 20:28-34, Philippians 2:3-8, Romans 7:6, Romans 15:1-2). A delineation of the attributes of Christian service was not included in the Bible, and the concept of servant leadership was undeveloped before Greenleaf (1977/2002) published *The Servant as Leader*. Since that time, SLT has been the preeminent framework through which researchers have interpreted the service component of leadership in Christian institutions (Banke et al., 2012; Harrison & Allen, 2012; Martin, 2018), thus implying that Christian leaders who affirm servant leadership are drawing on SLT principles to guide their practice. However, the link between biblical approaches to servant leadership and SLT is unclear; Christian leaders could be implementing a form of servant leadership that is distinct from SLT. The present study seeks to contribute to the literature on Christian leadership by empirically investigating Christian leaders' perceptions and practice of servant leadership through a biblical leadership framework, comparing those perceptions and practices to secular SLT characteristics.

The following literature review delineates servant leadership theory, discusses its use as a conceptual framework to study leadership in Christian institutions, and critiques its use for that purpose through a biblical lens. The literature review is divided into the following sections:

1. Theoretical Framework
2. Servant Leadership Theory
3. Use of Servant Leadership Theory to Study Servant Leadership in Christian Schools
4. Synthesis and Discussion

Theoretical Framework

The present study examined servant leadership through the lens of biblical leadership theory. The foundations of biblical leadership are in the name itself. Biblical leadership is comprised of leadership precepts as presented in the Bible. Characteristics of biblical leadership are delineated in two primary ways: (a) by explicit imperatives as written by authors of the Biblical canon and (b) by exegetical explanations of biblical leaders as models.

Servant Leadership Theory

Greenleaf (1977/2002) was the first to expound on servant leadership as a formal leadership philosophy; all theoretical developments and operationalizations of servant leadership were derived from Greenleaf's work. Greenleaf asserted that:

> The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The best test is: do

> those served grow as persons: do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or at least, not be further deprived? (p. 27)

At the core, the primary motive for a servant leader is to serve other people (Greenleaf, 1977/2002; Keith, 2015; Spears, 2000/2010). Greenleaf did not formally operationalize the attributes of servant leadership; Spears (2000/2010), who worked closely with Greenleaf at the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, delineated 10 constructs based upon Greenleaf's essay. Subsequent researchers developed operationalized constructs to measure servant leadership attributes, and the proliferation of research into SLT resulted in the development of 16 distinct instruments (Eva et al., 2019) that operationalized servant leadership constructs differently. Van Dierendonck's (2011) review of servant leadership models and instruments noted 44 constructs that often had overlapping definitions, which led to ambiguity concerning a unified model of servant leadership. Therefore, van Dierendonck isolated six common characteristics among the models. Table 1 includes the lists of servant leadership attributes identified by Spears (2000/2010) and van Dierendonck (2011).

Table 1

Servant Leader Attributes: Spears (2000/2010) and Van Dierendonck (2011)

Spears (2000/2010)	Van Dierendonck (2011)
Listening	Empowering and developing people
Empathy	Humility
Healing	Authenticity
Awareness	Interpersonal acceptance
Persuasion	Providing direction
Conceptualization	Stewardship
Foresight	
Stewardship	
Commitment to the growth of people	
Building community	

Van Dierendonck and Patterson's (2015) four-part model, consisting of the categories *motive, virtuous traits, servant leader behaviors,* and *follower outcomes*, was built upon van Dierendonck's (2011) and Patterson's (2003) models and expanded on previous models in two ways:

- The model subdivided servant leader attributes into character traits and behaviors, which aligned with Page and Wong's (2000) framework. However, van Dierendonck and Patterson (2003) posited a relationship between the two categories, arguing that the virtuous traits; which consisted of *humility, gratitude*, *forgiveness,* and *altruism*; are underlying factors for servant leadership behaviors.
- The model reintroduced the role of love as a component of servant leadership. Greenleaf (1977/2002) asserted love, or "unlimited liability" (p. 52) for others, as part of servant leadership, but subsequent quantitative measures of SLT did not include love as an item (Barbuto & Wheeler,

2006; Liden et al., 2008; Page & Wong, 2000; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Van Dierendonck and Patterson's (2015) model asserted *compassionate love*, which they associated with the Greek conception of *agapao* love, as the underlying motive for serving.

Use of Servant Leadership Theory to Study Servant Leadership in Christian Schools

Prior inquiries into servant leadership in Christian schools have found a perception of Christian school leaders as servant leaders among the participants (Banke et al., 2012; Harrison & Allen, 2012; Martin, 2018; Striepe & O'Donoghue, 2014; Temperley, 2016). SLT influenced many of these studies. Researchers (a) used SLT as the theoretical framework (Banke et al., 2012; Harrison & Allen, 2012; Martin, 2018), (b) used SLT instruments to collect data on servant leadership (Martin, 2018), or (c) aligned their findings with SLT (Harrison & Allen, 2012; Striepe & O'Donoghue, 2014; Temperley, 2016). One notable exception was Prior (2018), who distinguished the participants' perceptions of servant leadership as informed by their religious beliefs and not by SLT. The following sections will summarize the most germane research on the attributes of servant leadership in Christian schools and will critique the findings.

Banke et al. (2012) conducted a phenomenological study with a purposive sample of 12 senior-level Christian administrators to discover factors that affected their spiritual development and to understand how these factors influenced their practice as both spiritual and servant leaders. Banke et al. used a constant comparative method of data collection via semi-structured interviews and analysis via coding to conduct this inquiry. The participants indicated that their personal spirituality was influenced by (a) a Christian

upbringing, (b) church experiences, (c) college experiences, (d) personal Bible study, and (e) regular prayer. Thus, their perceptions of Christian school leadership were informed by their personal commitment to and understanding of biblical principles. The participants also asserted that the spiritual development of both employees and students must be central to the mission and vision of the Christian school.

Banke et al.'s (2012) study was affected by the misattribution of spiritual leadership as a component of Greenleaf's SLT, for Banke et al. stated that "Greenleaf's (1977) theory includes spirituality as a necessary part in servant leadership and bases this model of leadership on Jesus Christ" (p. 236). Banke et al.'s assertion is inaccurate. Greenleaf (1977/2002) cited Herman Hesse's *A Journey to the East* as the inspiration for his ideas on servant leadership (Locke, 2019), and Keith (2015), a protégé of Greenleaf who wrote for the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, asserted that concept of servant leadership could be found in many religious teachings. Banke et al. (2012) aligned the findings of the study with SLT, which precluded them from identifying some of the findings as distinctive traits of servant leadership in Christian contexts.

One of these distinctions regards the relationship between Christian faith and servant leadership. The participants asserted a belief that both their personal mission as a leader and the fundamental mission of Christian schools was to serve people by helping them develop their Christian faith. Although a component of servant leadership as described in SLT is an investment in the personal and professional growth of followers (Greenleaf, 1977/2002; Keith, 2015; Spears, 2000/2010), this behavior is initiated within the context of helping followers to accomplish organizational goals. However, the participants in this study indicated that the spiritual development of stakeholders is the

fundamental goal of a Christian organization. This principal is consistent with Jesus' imperative for his followers to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*, 2001/2007, Matthew 28:16-20).

Participants also asserted that their approach to leadership was informed by biblical study and prayer, which indicates a belief that the source of their growth as leaders is a personal investment in faith. In contrast, growth for a servant leader as described in SLT is precipitated by listening to, empathizing with, and being responsive to the perceived needs of his or her followers (Greenleaf, 1977/2002; Spears, 2000/2010). Therefore, the growth of a servant leader in the SLT model is an investment in others, not an investment in himself or herself.

Since Banke et al. (2012) used a phenomenological design with participants from unspecified locations, the findings do not necessarily represent the beliefs of all Christian leaders. However, the consistency between the findings, common Christian preaching, and New Testament teaching could indicate that future research would find similar beliefs. Therefore, the findings of this study contributed valuable insights into the distinctive attributes of servant leadership in Christian environments.

Harrison and Allen (2012) conducted an exploratory qualitative study with a convenience sample of six Christian school administrators from Christian K-12 schools in Washington and Oregon to understand Christian school leaders' perspectives on the characteristics of Christian administrators, roles of Christian administrators, and the nature of professional development for teachers. Harrison and Allen's data collection

methodology consisted of (a) conducting, recording, and transcribing two focus group interviews; (b) recording field notes during the interviews; and (c) administering a GLOBE leadership survey; this process took place over 2 months. Harrison and Allen (2012) found the following:

- Participants indicated that Christian leaders demonstrate personal commitments to the Christian faith, to the spiritual development of students, and to serving the community.
- Participants indicated Christian leaders focus on developing, sharing, and implementing the mission, vision, and core values of the organization, which is centered around the spiritual development of students.
- Participants frequently discussed servant leadership as a key component of Christian leadership practice.
- Participants indicated a preference for "administrator decision making, a more paternalistic and authoritative approach to leadership" (p. 12).

Harrison and Allen (2012) used a combination of transformational leadership theory, SLT, and the teamwork approach to guide the inquiry. Their findings regarding service and servant leadership were limited to those constructs which are associated with SLT, which led to their conclusion that the participants' beliefs about leadership aligned with SLT because they mentioned serving others. Like Banke et al. (2012), this approach precluded Harrison and Allen from finding attributes that distinguish servant leadership in Christian environments from those delineated in SLT. Harrison and Allen also found that the participants indicated that Christian leaders (a) demonstrated a personal commitment to developing their faith and (b) recognized the spiritual development of

followers as central to the mission of Christian schools, which coincides with Banke et al. (2012). This could indicate commonality among Christian leaders regarding these topics.

Striepe and O'Donoghue (2014) conducted a qualitative case study using semi-structured interviews to investigate Christian school leaders' perspectives on educational leadership, including an inquiry into how leadership theory influences these perceptions. This study was conducted at a K-12 Catholic school in Australia, and the participants included all seven members of the school's administrative team. Striepe and O'Donoghue found that the participants indicated a perspective of leadership informed by servant leadership; the participants indicated a belief that servant leadership was supported by the Gospels, was central to the Catholic faith, and was thus a key component of a Christian school's mission. The participants' discussions on servant leadership practice included three components:

- having a calling to serve students, staff, and the larger community;
- leading as a community by (a) establishing and maintaining relationships with all stakeholders, (b) working together with others as a team, and (c) establishing a common vision among all stakeholders; and
- building within the school the capacity to serve as a community by listening to stakeholder input, modeling leadership, inspiring followers, and empowering followers.

Additionally, the participants identified the spiritual development of its students as a core element of the school's mission.

Although Striepe and O'Donoghue's (2014) used a grounded theory approach to guide data analysis, they asserted that the findings regarding servant leadership were

aligned with Greenleaf's (1977/2002) model. However, the participants indicated that their commitment to servant leadership was informed by an understanding that Jesus practiced servant leadership. This finding indicates that the fundamental motive was to practice leadership based on Jesus's model, which stands in contrast to the prime motive of a servant leader as detailed by SLT: to serve other people (Greenleaf, 1977/2002; Keith, 2015; Spears, 2000/2010). Although Striepe and O'Donoghue's methodological choices limited the generalizability of this finding, the notion that Christian leaders desire to align their leadership practices with those of Jesus is common in the Christian leadership literature and is supported by a New Testament imperative to allow Christ's teachings to shape all aspects of their lives (Bell, 2014; Reel, 2015; *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version,* 2001/2007, 1 Corinthians 11:1, 1 John 2:6, 1 Peter 2:21, John 13:13-17; Wilkes, 1998).

Temperley's (2016) study was a doctoral dissertation, which lacks the credibility of peer-reviewed literature. However, this study was particularly germane to the present study, for Temperley used a qualitative methodology to specifically investigate Christian school administrators' practices and perceptions of servant leadership. Considering the paucity of published research on servant leadership in Christian schools and the relevance of Temperley's (2016) findings to the published literature, a review of this study is included below.

Temperley (2016) argued that servant leadership is an effective method of leadership in education, but few studies have investigated its use in Christian schools. Temperley (2016) asserted the value of studying leadership practices in Christian schools and suggested that empirical study in this area could help Christian school leaders

discover practices that will assist them in pursuing their missions. Therefore, Temperley (2016) conducted a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews with eight administrators who were either serving as principals or superintendents in Christian schools in Arizona to determine (a) the role of servant leadership in the leaders' practices, (b) specific leadership actions that the leaders used to promote success, and (c) the alignment between the leaders' responses and servant leadership behaviors. Temperley (2016) found that all participants discussed the importance of the following servant leadership behaviors:

- empowering others,
- teambuilding,
- building community,
- being a visionary, and
- listening.

Furthermore, Temperley (2016) found that the administrators emphasized (a) the importance of prayer and biblical study as a basis for decision-making, (b) the importance of delegating responsibility to others, and (c) serving others. Based on the participants' responses, Temperley (2016) concluded that these administrators demonstrated many traits that are consistent with servant leadership traits. Furthermore, Temperley (2016) suggested that the administrators' religious practices facilitated their servant leadership traits.

Like the other studies, Temperley (2016) concluded that the leaders' responses were aligned with SLT principles, thus indicating that they "met the criteria for being servant leaders" (p. 74). However, Temperley (2016) found that the participants'

leadership practices, including the practice of servant leadership, were informed by their religious practices, which was consistent with the findings of Banke et al. (2012) and Striepe and O'Donoghue (2014). Considering that these studies were conducted at different times with different participants across geographical regions and among different cultures, this finding may be generalizable to all Christian school leaders.

Martin (2018) implemented a mixed-methods design to determine the leadership characteristics of principals in high-performing Christian schools using the theoretical lenses of instructional leadership theory and servant leadership theory. The participants included 9 elementary principals, 9 middle and high school principals, and 280 teachers from ACSI-accredited schools across the midwest, northeast, and southeast. Initial data were collected via open-ended interview questions, which Martin (2018) developed to address gaps in the survey instruments to be used during quantitative data collection; these data were analyzed using a constant comparative method. Martin (2018) collected follow-up data using two quantitative instruments: Barbuto and Wheeler's (2006) Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ) and Hallinger's (1990) Principal Instructional Management Scale (PIMRS). Martin (2018) analyzed these data using descriptive statistics and ANOVA analysis in SPSS, including an ANOVA analysis on the relationship between servant leadership characteristics and instructional leadership characteristics.

Regarding servant leadership, which is most germane to the present study, Martin (2018) found the following:

- The teachers rated their principals as highly engaged in the organizational stewardship and altruistic calling characteristics of servant leadership.

- The principals indicated a self-perception of high engagement in organizational stewardship, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and emotional healing.
- All participants indicated that the principals' most prevalent servant leadership quality was the belief that their schools needed to function as a community, with "administrators, teachers, staff, parents, students, and all school stakeholders working together" (p. 178).

Martin's (2018) decision to include a diverse participant population made the findings more representative of the target population, Christian school principals, which strengthened the external validity of the findings. However, limiting the sample to perceptions of servant leadership characteristics of school principals limited the degree to which these findings could apply to other leaders in school settings, such as (a) assistant principals, (b) instructional coordinators, (c) teacher leaders, (d) student leaders, and (e) parent leaders.

Martin's (2018) use of Barbuto and Wheeler's (2006) Servant Leadership Questionnaire to assess participant perceptions of servant leadership qualities among the principals placed limitations on the degree to which Martin (2018) could understand the nature of servant leadership. Researchers have found this instrument to have good reliability, support for the five-factor structure, and reasonable goodness of fit across geographical regions and industries, including secular educational institutions, Christian churches, and Christian schools. Therefore, this instrument is an appropriate measure of the five factors of servant leadership identified by Barbuto and Wheeler (Al-Mahdy et al., 2016; Coggins & Bocarnea, 2015; Garber et al., 2009; Khan et al., 2015; Mahembe &

Engelbrecht, 2013; Martin, 2018). However, Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) developed items for this instrument by using Spears' (2000/2010) servant leadership characteristics. Therefore, Martin's (2018) findings regarding servant leadership were limited to these five factors, which precluded the possibility of discovering distinct characteristics of servant leadership in Christian environments.

Noting that few studies had investigated the practice of leadership in Christian Education Network (CEN) schools, which were based in Australia, Prior (2018) designed a qualitative multiple-case study to understand what CEN school leaders (1) believed were the fundamental precepts of CEN and (2) perceived about their leadership qualities as CEN leaders. Three groups of participants were purposively selected for this study: (a) CEN national office staff; (b) school principals from 10 CEN schools in Victoria, Australia; and (c) other senior leadership team members from the 10 CEN schools. Prior (2018) used a two-step data collection process, conducting semi-structured interviews with the school principals and administering an online survey to the CEN national office staff and CEN school leaders.

The participants perceived three fundamental precepts of CEN schools: "The lordship of Jesus Christ over all of life, biblical worldview-informed practice and parental responsibility for education" (Prior, 2018, p. 130). With regards to leadership, the school leaders perceived servant leadership to be evident in CEN schools, and this servant leadership was "informed more by the Christian faith, understanding that Christ taught and modeled service and sacrifice, than by Greenleaf's conceptualization, of which they seemingly had little knowledge" (Prior, 2018, p. 137). School leaders also advocated for a shared model of leadership and for a leadership style characterized by the

communication of a vision and the empowering of followers to help realize that vision (Prior, 2018).

Prior's (2018) findings provided relevant insight into the motives and perceived behaviors associated with servant leadership in Christian schools. The participants indicated that Christian school leaders perceive the primary motive for servant leadership in a Christian school as becoming more like Christ, who served as the prototypical model of servant leadership. This finding is consistent with Banke et al. (2012), Striepe and O'Donoghue (2014) and Temperley (2016), who found that participants' beliefs about serving were informed by their faith.

Prior's (2018) study took place in Australia, which has a distinct culture from the United States. However, the core values of CEN (n.d.), which is an Australia-based Christian school organization, are closely related both to the accreditation requirements of the ACSI (2018/2020), the largest accrediting organization for Christian schools both in the United States and abroad, and the precepts of Schultz's (1998) kingdom education, which ACSI recognizes as a valid resource for professional development as a means of certifying teachers (ACSI, n.d.). Due to the philosophical cohesion between CEN and ACSI schools and the adherence of the school leaders to the precepts of CEN, Prior's (2018) findings could have relevance to the understanding of leadership in Christian schools in the United States.

Synthesis and Discussion

Except for Prior (2018), the use of SLT in these studies may have limited the understanding of servant leadership characteristics at those schools. In studies where distinctively Christian components of servant leadership were found, the authors

reconciled these with the SLT framework rather than noting them as potential indications of a different framework (Harrison & Allen, 2012; Striepe & O'Donoghue, 2014; Temperley, 2016). By reviewing these studies through a biblical leadership theoretical lens, I identified three potential distinctions between servant leadership in Christian environments and SLT: (1) Christlikeness as the motive for servant leadership, (2) discipleship as both an organizational mission and core component of servant leadership, and (3) biblically grounded leadership practices. The following sections expound on these characteristics and compare them to SLT principles.

Christlikeness as the Motive for Service

A fundamental precept of Christianity is that Christ is the exemplar of righteous and holy behavior; thus, the objective of a Christian is to model his or her behavior after Christ's example and teaching (Paulien, 2014; *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version,* 2001/2007, 1 Corinthians 11:1-3, 1 John 2:3-6, Ephesians, 5:1-2, John 15:12; Wilkes, 1998). Jesus taught about the priorities of the Christian in his discussion of the greatest commandments:

> You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. (*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version,* 2001/2007, Matthew 22:35-39)

This teaching emphasizes that service to others is secondary to one's relationship with God, which is characterized by obedience and service to God's commands as delineated in the biblical canon (Babyak, 2018; *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version,* 2001/2007, James 4:7-8, John 14:15-21, Matthew 7:21). This principle stands in

contrast to SLT, which affirms that a desire to serve other people is the preeminent motive for a servant leader (Greenleaf, 1977/2002; Keith, 2015; Spears, 2000/2010). The participants in the studies conducted by Striepe and O'Donoghue (2014) and Prior (2018) noted that their approaches to servant leadership were informed by the perception of Christ as a model servant leader, which indicated that they served as a means of emulating Christ's leadership. Temperley (2016) also found Christlikeness to be a prime motivator for administrators in ACSI schools in Arizona. This motive to become more Christlike manifests in commitments to the spiritual formation of oneself and to grounding leadership practices in biblical principles, as is discussed in the following two sections.

Discipleship as the Mission of Servant Leadership

For the Christian institution, Jesus prescribed the overarching mission in Matthew 28:19-20 (*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*, 2001/2007): Discipline others in the beliefs, thoughts, and practices of Jesus and then send them out to do the same. As a result, the spiritual formation of stakeholders is both the fundamental mission of all Christian institutions and is a core component of a leader's service to his or her followers. The Apostle Peter affirmed this in his first letter to the church leaders in Asia minor:

> As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good steward of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies - in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. (*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*, 1 Peter 3:13)

Banke et al. (2012), Harrison and Allen (2012), and Striepe and O'Donoghue (2014) all found the perception of spiritual formation as central to the mission of the Christian schools they studied. In the Protestant Christian school environment, the spiritual formation of staff and students is a requirement for accreditation (American Association of Christian Schools [AACS], 2012; Association of Christian Schools International, 2018/2020). Christian school leaders are required to provide evidence of a systematic approach to the spiritual development of staff and students. Thus, Protestant Christian school leaders in accredited schools practice spiritual formation as a key component of servant leadership. Although SLT establishes that servant leaders are committed to the personal and professional growth of their followers (Greenleaf, 1977/2002; Spears, 2000/2010), spiritual development is not specifically associated with this practice and is not prescribed as a central organizational mission.

Biblically-Grounded Leadership Practices

As previously mentioned, the Christian aligns his or her leadership practice with Christ's model and teaching of leadership. For the Christian school, accreditation by ACSI and AACS requires a school to ground its statement of faith, school philosophy, mission, and decisions in biblical principles, which must be explicitly referenced in all foundational school documents (American Association of Christian Schools, 2012; Association of Christian Schools International, 2018/2020). This reflects the teaching of Paul and James, who emphasized that Christian leaders should utilize the scriptures to inform their teaching and practice (*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*, 2 Timothy 3:14-17, James 1:22-25, Titus 1:9). Thus, the Christian leader, who serves others through his or her spiritual formation, delimits his or her leadership practices to only those that

align with biblical teaching. In contrast, there is no prescription for servant leaders under SLT to align their leadership practices with any particular source; they determine their leadership practices based upon what they believe will best benefit their followers or society (Greenleaf, 1977/2002; Spears, 2000/2010), which may not include their spiritual development. Since the participants in the studies conducted by Prior (2018), Striepe and O'Donoghue (2014), and Temperley (2016) indicated that their servant leadership practices, which consisted of serving others by facilitating their spiritual growth, were informed by biblical study and prayer, they would not necessarily qualify as servant leaders under SLT.

Summary

As previously discussed, previous research into the nature of servant leadership in Christian schools has not focused on identifying distinctively Christian attributes of servant leadership that could indicate fundamental differences in how servant leadership is perceived in those contexts (Banke et al., 2012; Harrison & Allen, 2012; Martin, 2018; Striepe & O'Donoghue, 2014; Temperley, 2016). Except for Martin (2018), these studies featured a participant sample consisting of only senior most administrators. All schools, including Christian schools, are comprised of individuals representing a variety of stakeholder perspectives; many of these individuals both lead others and are led by others in those schools (Hughes & Pickeral, 2013; Lambert, 2002; Printy & Marks, 2010) and can, therefore, contribute to a holistic understanding of servant leadership in Christian schools. Considering these two weaknesses, the proposed distinctive attributes of servant leadership in Christian schools may not fully represent the scope of attributes that distinguish servant leadership in Christian environments from those associated with SLT.

A lack of empirical inquiry into these distinctions indicates a need for further inquiry; the purpose of this study was to discover those distinctions, thus contributing to a more generalized understanding of the nature of servant leadership in the Christian school context..

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In Christian institutions, servant leadership is imperative; Jesus and his followers discussed the preeminence of leadership through service throughout the New Testament (Chung, 2011; *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*, 2001/2007, 1 Peter 4:10-11, Mark 10:42-45, Matthew 22:39, Philippians 2:4-7; Wilkes, 1998). In Christian schools, servant leadership is expected to be instilled in the students. ACSI (2018/2020) requires schools to provide "age-appropriate opportunities for service and missions, including compassionate outreach to the poor, needy, or vulnerable" (p. 31) for accreditation. Inherent in this requirement is the assumption that the schools will prepare their students to be compassionate and service-minded. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that Christian schools will provide servant-leadership training and practice in their schools.

As previously discussed, inquiries into the attributes of servant leadership in Christian schools have been informed by Greenleaf's (1977/2002) model of servant leadership (Banke et al., 2012; Harrison & Allen, 2012; Martin, 2018; Striepe & O'Donoghue, 2014; Temperley, 2016). However, the attributes of SLT do not fully coincide with attributes of servant leadership in Christian schools: Even though findings of previous studies have demonstrated distinctive attributes of servant leadership in Christian schools, they were not identified as distinct from the attributes of SLT. Therefore, a holistic understanding of servant leadership in Christian schools requires

further research that focuses on distinguishing servant leadership in these contexts from servant leadership as described in SLT. This qualitative case study was intended to contribute to the literature on servant leadership in Christian schools by investigating the following research questions:

- How does servant leadership manifest in leadership training and leadership practice in a Christian school?
- What are the stakeholders' perceptions of servant leadership attributes?
- How do stakeholders perceive that servant leadership is being implemented in a Christian school?
- How do stakeholders believe that servant leadership affects followers?

Because there is little empirical knowledge about servant leadership in Christian schools, this study will provide a foundation upon which future inquiries can be conducted. This chapter details the methodology by which the present study was conducted, which is structured as follows: (a) the overall design of the study, (b) the sampling procedures, (c) the data collection procedures, (d) the data analysis procedures, (e) validity and reliability, and (f) researcher biases.

Design of the Study

This study was developed using a qualitative case study design. Yin (2003) wrote that "the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena. In brief, the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (p. 2). Servant leadership is a complex phenomenon; even within one organization, it manifests in interpersonal, organizational, and societal contexts (Greenleaf, 1977/2002; Keith, 2015; Spears,

2000/2010). Since servant leadership manifests in such a broad set of contexts, the holistic approach that is characteristic of case study is appropriate for understanding the complexities of the phenomenon.

Furthermore, a single case study design was appropriate for this study because of the distinct contribution that the study will provide to the literature on servant leadership. Yin (2003) wrote:

> Overall, the single case design is eminently justifiable under certain conditions - when the case represents (a), a critical test of existing theory, (b) a rare or unique circumstance, or (c) a representative or typical case or when the case serves a, (d) revelatory or, (e) longitudinal purpose. (pp. 45-46)

Since few empirical studies have examined servant leadership in Christian schools as a novel theory, the present study provided foundational knowledge that could serve as the basis for further empirical inquiry, thus satisfying the "revelatory" component of Yin's (2003) assertion. Additionally, the present study focused in part on testing the application of servant leadership theory to Christian contexts, seeking to determine if there were distinctive attributes of servant leadership in those contexts that would differentiate it from servant leadership theory; this satisfied the critical test component of Yin's (2003) assertion.

Qualitative case studies share the same basic characteristics as other qualitative designs. Essentially, "the focus is on process, understanding, and meaning; a researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive; and the product is richly descriptive" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 15). However, case studies are distinguished by their focus on providing an in-depth examination of a phenomenon

within a limited context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). Yin (2003) noted that "you would use the case study method because you deliberately wanted to cover contextual conditions - believing that they might be highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study" (p. 13).

Flexibility is a key component of case study. To gain a holistic understanding of any phenomenon, it may be necessary to modify the design. Yin (2003) wrote, "You should not think that a case study's design cannot be modified by new information or discovery during data collection. Such revelations can be enormously important, leading to your altering or modifying your original design" (p. 55). One begins a study with a set of research questions that reflect issues he or she gleaned from the literature, but new data may reveal other issues of relevance to the study. Thus, a researcher's original research questions "may not fit the case circumstances well and need repair. Issues evolve. And *emic issues* emerge. These are the issues of the actors, the people who belong to the case. These are issues from the inside" (Stake, 1995, p. 20). These new revelations may lead to new issues that need to be studied, which may require modifications to initial research questions, sampling decisions, data collection methods, and/or analyses.

Sample Selection

To gain the most holistic perspective on the role of servant leadership in an institution, qualitative case study designs implement purposive sampling. Intentionally selecting individuals who will provide the most meaningful insight into the phenomenon of interest (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015; Stake, 1995). This study used a two-tiered purposive sampling process in alignment with Merriam and Tisdell (2016), who asserted:

> Two levels of sampling are usually necessary in qualitative case studies. First, you must select the case to be studied. Then, unless you plan to interview, observe, or analyze all the people, activities, or documents within the case, you will need to do some sampling within the case. (p. 99)

The following section details the site selection process, followed by a section detailing the participant sampling process.

Site Selection

To gain a deep understanding of the perceptions and practices of servant leadership in a Christian school, it was important to establish a sampling process that resulted in selecting a school that was firmly grounded in Christian beliefs and that incorporated servant leadership into its operations and/or instruction. Few regulations prohibit a private school from being labeled a Christian school, and people have different conceptions of what constitutes Christian education. Shultz (1998) wrote:

> Christian education has become narrowly defined by various groups within the body of Christ. Some believe it only refers to what happens in a Sunday School setting, others believe it deals specifically with Christian schooling, while still others define it as Christian higher education. (p. 23)

Due to this inconsistency, Shultz (1998) developed a philosophy of *kingdom education*, which consists of 10 principles:

1. The education of children and youth is the primary responsibility of parents.
2. The education of children and youth is a 24 hour-a-day, 7 days-per-week process that continues from birth to maturity.

3. The education of children and youth must have as its primary goals the salvation of and discipleship of the next generation.
4. The education of children and youth must be based on God's Word as absolute truth.
5. The education of children and youth must hold Christ as preeminent in all of life.
6. The education of children and youth must not hinder the spiritual and moral development of the next generation.
7. The education of children and youth, if and when delegated to others by parents, must be done so with utmost care to ensure that all teachers follow these principles.
8. The education of children and youth results in the formation of a biblical belief system or worldview.
9. The education of children and youth must lead to true wisdom by connecting all knowledge to a biblical worldview frame of reference.
10. The education of children and youth must have a view of the future that includes the eternal perspective.

This philosophy was designed to ground educational philosophy for Christian schools in biblical teaching. Since service is a key component of New Testament teaching on Christian practice (Chung, 2011; *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*, 2001/2007, 1 Peter 4:10-11, Mark 10:42-45, Matthew 22:39, Philippians 2:4-7; Wilkes, 1998), school leaders that use biblical teaching to inform school practices are likely to demonstrate servant leadership and to teach servant leadership principles both to staff and

to students. Therefore, site selection was delimited to schools that affirmed Schultz's (1998) kingdom education philosophy.

However, the school needed to exhibit more than an assertion that it grounds its organizational structure in Shultz's (1998) principles; any Christian school can claim to do so. Independent assessment, such as the process for acquiring accreditation from the ACSI, would maximize the likelihood that a school implements what its documents assert. The ACSI (2018/2020) accreditation process requires that schools demonstrate biblically-centered practices in eight areas:

1. Philosophy and Foundations
2. Governance and Executive Leadership
3. Home and Community Relations and Student Services
4. Personnel
5. Instructional Program and Resources
6. Student Care
7. Character, Values, and Spiritual Formation of Students
8. Continuous School Improvement Plan

These accountability measures include key provisions regarding servant leadership. As previously mentioned, ACSI-accredited schools must provide students with opportunities to lead through service. Additionally, ACSI (2018/2020) asserts that "one of the most essential ways Christian educators follow Christ's example in their instructional practices is by building relationships with students and tailoring their responses to individual needs" (p. 19). Thus, ACSI requires teachers and administrators to practice leadership by serving their students.

There is also an overlap between ACSI accreditation requirements and Shultz's (1998) kingdom education philosophy. Included in the justification for accreditation standards was the following statement:

> Since parents are a child's primary teachers, schools must respect the critical role parents play in supporting the growth and development of their child. Scripture clearly establishes the parental mandate to teach spiritual truths throughout all aspects of daily life (Deuteronomy 6:6–7). The education offered in a Christian school must be Christ-centered. Effective partnerships with parents are a vital part of quality education. A rapport is built between staff and parents that supports communication between the home and the education program. (ACSI, 2018/2020, p. 16)

The first and second clauses referred directly to Shultz's (1998) first principle of kingdom education: that the onus for the education of a child belongs to the parents of that child. The third clause relates directly to the third, fourth, fifth, and eighth principles of kingdom education. Additionally, ACSI (2018/2020) required all heads of school, all K-12 principals, and at least 80% of the staff members to have either ACSI certification or "state, national, or provincial certification plus Christian philosophy and Bible requirements" (pp. 19-20). A key component of this was the Christian philosophy of education requirement (ACSI, n.d.). A professional development regimen focused on developing a Christian philosophy of education and focused on implementing biblical integration into instruction. In its explanation of the Christian philosophy of education requirement, ACSI (n.d.) affirmed God's Word as truth, which reflects Schultz's (1998) fourth principle of kingdom education. Therefore, to maximize the likelihood of a school

site implementing servant leadership, site selection was further delimited to schools that were accredited by ACSI.

The school system that was selected for this study, which is referred to as "First Christian" and the "First Christian School System" to preserve anonymity, met both delimitation criteria. First Christian affirmed in its website, operating constitution, parent/student handbook, employee handbook, and staff development module that the school's educational philosophy was founded upon the principles of Schultz's (1998) kingdom education. First Christian's vision statement asserted *kingdom education* as the approach by which the school would become a *Christian school of excellence,* and Schultz's (1998) principles, including an exposition on each and implications for parents, school personnel, and church personnel, were included in the school's operating constitution. Additionally, First Christian had *exemplary accredited* status with ACSI, an accreditation status that features more rigorous accreditation requirements than standard accreditation.

Initial contact to request participation in the study consisted of an email to the head of school, which a brief synopsis of the purpose and methodology for the study. The head of school accepted the request, referring me to a point of contact person who was a staff member and had previously worked with doctoral students to conduct studies at the school. Subsequent conversations with the point of contact person, which included emails and two phone conferences, focused on (a) providing details regarding the purpose of the study, the methodology, and the data selection criteria; (b) establishing the best period to conduct an in-person site visit for data collection; and (c) drafting a visitation schedule,

which included an initial set of interviews and field observations that were to be conducted during the scheduled visit.

Within-Site Sample

To achieve the most holistic understanding of a case, it is imperative for researchers to purposefully select samples that will provide the most relevant and meaningful data (Gray, 2004; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015; Stake, 1995). In case study, comprehensive data collection is comprised of data from interviews, field observations, and document review, which facilitates methodological triangulation and, thereby, strengthens the credibility of the findings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2003). Additionally, snowball sampling is commonly used in qualitative case studies to identify relevant and meaningful sources of data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015); participants tend to know where a researcher may find the most useful information about a case. Finally, sampling until the data becomes redundant is imperative for gaining a holistic understanding of a phenomenon within its context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015; Stake, 1995). Thus, I used a combination of purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques to guide data collection.

To develop an initial list of potential data sources for this study, I referenced the previous literature; used my personal experience as a Christian school administrator; and consulted with the point of contact person, who served as an informant (a) by recommending and providing requested documents and artifacts; (b) by helping select activities and events to observe; and (c) by assisting with selecting, contacting, and scheduling interview participants in accordance with the participant selection criteria

established for the study. Subsequent potential data sources emerged during interviews and field observations; these were considered and incorporated into data collection as appropriate. The following sections discuss how data were collected from each source and discuss initial criteria for selecting data sources.

Interviewees

Davidson (2014), in a discussion of servant leadership in relation to Biblical teaching, asserted that "a servant leader is someone whose nature is characterized by service to God and to others, possessing a servant's heart, and such an individual need not be in a position or office of responsibility to exercise leadership" (p. 18). In schools, individuals assume a variety of stakeholder associations with a school: (a) administrators, (b) teachers, (c) support staff members, (d) students, (e) alumni, (f) parents, and (g) board members. Since individuals in all stakeholder roles can simultaneously exercise leadership and follow others' leadership, individuals in all roles have experience with leadership in a school that could provide meaningful insights into the phenomenon of interest. Thus, the initial data collection plan for individuals included purposefully selecting at least two candidates from each of the stakeholder categories as a means of attaining maximum variation, which would strengthen data analysis because "any common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared dimensions of a setting or phenomenon" (Patton, 2015, p. 428).

Overall, I interviewed 37 participants for the study. First Christian was comprised of two campuses and maintained partnerships with two other schools. I conducted interviews at all campuses but discovered that the two partner schools, though receiving

significant financial and administrative support from the school, were mostly independent of and were culturally distinct from First Christian. Thus, four interviews, which were conducted at these partner schools, were excluded from data analysis, resulting in an interview data set consisting of 33 participants.

During data collection, I discovered that participants assumed multiple stakeholder perspectives: Some participants were both employees and alumni, some were both board members and parents, and some were both employees and parents. Participants who assumed multiple stakeholder roles at times expressed perspectives that represented specific stakeholder associations. Additionally, some participants had previously assumed a different stakeholder association with the school, and at times this perspective was represented by their responses. Therefore, I was careful to include all stakeholder associations in the participant coding process and was careful to report participant responses according to the stakeholder role represented during the response. Table 2 shows the stakeholder associations represented by the 33 interview participants.

Table 2

Stakeholder Associations Represented by Interview Participants

Stakeholder Association	n
Administrator	12
Teacher	3
Support Staff Member	8
Board Member	3
Student	6
Alumni	3
Parent	6

Note. n = 33.

Field Observations

As previously mentioned, servant leadership manifests in the way that the leader invests in the growth of his or her followers (Greenleaf, 1977/2002; Keith, 2015; Spears, 2000/2010). To determine the best opportunities for field observations, the initial data collection plan included conducting informal visits during the spring semester of 2020 to determine activities and events that would provide the most meaningful opportunities to learn about servant leadership at the school and included observations of beginning-of-year staff development days. However, approval for this study required two institutional review processes: one with Louisiana Tech University and a separate review process with ACSI's research department. These processes were completed in late August 2020, and I initiated contact with the site of study shortly thereafter. The 2020-2021 school year had already begun, so I consulted with the point of contact person to establish the best period during the fall semester to collect data, including the best opportunities for field observations during that period.

I conducted eight field observations at First Christian, which included collecting data during

- A planning meeting for minimester, which was to occur during spring 2021;
- A parent-training seminar;
- A student chapel service;
- A secondary campus committee of the board meeting;
- An observation of the physical building at the primary campus;
- A senior leadership meeting;

- A leadership meeting with the head of school for one of the affiliate schools; and
- A staff training session, which was designated a “culture” training.

Documents

ACSI (2018/2020) accreditation requires schools to maintain thorough documentation of all school operations, including

- “written statements of philosophy, missions, vision, core values, and schoolwide expected outcomes as well as a statement of faith” (p. 11);
- the instructional program, policies and procedures that guide the instructional program, and resources used to support the instructional program; and
- policies and resources used to “ensure students’ well-being – emotional, physical, spiritual, and academic” (p. 28).

Documentation requirements that were particularly relevant to this study included schoolwide expected outcomes detailing “character development, acquisition of Christian values, and spiritual formation” (ACSI, 2018/2020, p. 32) and included details about missions and service opportunities for students “as a means of spiritual growth and formation” (ACSI, 2018/2020, p. 32).

First Christian documented these elements in a set of policy manuals, including (a) a school constitution, (b) a parent/student handbook, (c) an employee handbook, and (d) a staff development module. Additionally, First Christian’s website detailed a student leadership training program, which asserted servant leadership as a central component. Therefore, document collection consisted of collecting these documents and collecting

documented information about the student leadership training program, including training documents that were used with the students. Additional documents included (a) demographic information about the school, (b) agendas for board and leadership meetings, (c) an organization chart, (d) and the "Personal Christ-like Assessment."

Data Collection

In qualitative case study inquiry, a researcher's role includes being the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Since the personal involvement of the researcher in case study inquiry inherently includes some level of subjectivity, maximizing the validity of the study overall requires researchers to intentionally design data collection procedures to be as accurate as possible, including keeping "a good record of events to provide a relatively incontestable description for further analysis and ultimate reporting" (Stake, 1995, p. 62).

Additionally, emergent design is an important element of qualitative case study. Although a data collection plan is established before the study, data collection and analysis during the study are conducted concurrently, and qualitative researchers use a constant comparative cycle of data collection and analysis to inform methods and sources for future data collection (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). The cycle of data collection and analysis continues until the data become redundant; data saturation signals to a researcher that the phenomenon of study has been thoroughly investigated and that the most relevant alternative explanations for the data have been considered (Denzin, 1978; Gray, 2004; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015; Stake, 1995). This process strengthens the validity of the findings overall. The data

collection and analysis plan, which is described below, was developed to align with the above principles.

Conceptual Framework

I used van Dierendonck and Patterson's (2015) servant leadership framework, which was developed from a review of the literature on SLT, to guide data collection. As previously discussed, this framework consisted of four categories: motive, virtuous traits, servant leader behaviors, and follower outcomes. Although this framework was synthesized from previous research on SLT, the language used for the categories was generic, and I posited that the framework could be used as an axial coding scheme to facilitate the process of identifying distinctions between servant leadership in secular and Christian environments. Therefore, I developed the interview protocol with reference to this framework and initially intended to use the four categories as an axial coding scheme to guide data analysis. I also tested the framework for content validity, finding some degree of content validity for all four categories, but the categories virtuous traits and servant leader behaviors were the only two to exceed the threshold for content validity at the $p \leq .05$ level established by Lawshe (1975). Since the participants did not indicate sufficient content validity for all elements of the framework, I decided to not use these for axial coding. Rather, I chose to develop axial coding schemes through direct analysis of the data; this process is detailed in the analysis section of this chapter. However, the findings of the study aligned with van Dierendonck and Patterson's (2015) framework. It is likely that this was because the framework was referenced to develop the interview protocol, but for transparency purposes, I thought it appropriate to disclose the validity test.

Interviews

A semi-structured interview protocol, which was developed with reference to van Dierendonck and Patterson's (2015) framework, guided interview data collection. A copy of the initial interview protocol is included in Appendix A**.** Testing for the initial protocol consisted of alpha and beta testing; the next section details this process, followed by a description of the data collection process for interviews.

Alpha and Beta Testing

The chairperson of my dissertation committee conducted initial alpha testing for the interview protocol items and recommended that the questions be reworded to be more open-ended as a means of facilitating more response variance from participants. After revising the questions, I developed a feedback questionnaire for further alpha testing; a sample of the feedback questionnaire is included in Appendix B. Feedback questionnaires included minor variations in wording to improve the relevance of the questions for each participant.

Twelve participants from my personal and professional network consisting of students, teachers, parents, administrators, and support staff participated in alpha testing. These participants were purposely selected because their stakeholder perspectives aligned with the perspectives of participants I anticipated interviewing at the participating site (Dikko, 2016; Majid et al., 2017). I contacted each participant or participant parent and invited them to participate in the study. After obtaining verbal consent to participate, I followed up with an email containing a formal consent form, formal minor assent forms as applicable, and a feedback questionnaire. In the feedback questionnaire, participants indicated (a) if they understood the each item in the questionnaire, (b) if they thought

each item in the questionnaire was clear, and (c) if they thought they could easily answer each item in the questionnaire.

Upon review, participants indicated confusion about the information they were asked to provide in Question 4a: The participants were unsure if I was asking them if they thought of people who served as leaders or if those people held leadership positions in the school. Upon reflection with consideration to the other interview questions, I determined that this question is most useful for determining if the people that were good at serving others held leadership positions. Therefore, I decided to revise the question to ask: "Do the people who are good at serving others hold leadership positions at the school?"

Participants also provided suggestions to improve the wording of Question 1. The participants indicated that the question was too broad. Although this question was designed to be intentionally vague to maximize response variance, I questioned whether it might be more useful to prime participants with the idea that "leadership" can include more than working in an administrative position. However, I resolved to retain the original wording and keep that idea about priming in mind during beta testing.

Participants also indicated that the wording of Question 2 was confusing and recommended a simplification of language. Thus, I revised the question to ask more simply: "What led you to identify these people as leaders?" I also determined that Questions 7 and 8 needed revision; they limited participants to yes or no answers. Although each was paired with an open-ended follow-up, those follow-up questions were designed to follow only an affirmative answer to the parent question. Therefore, the questions were revised to the following:

- What has your experience at this school taught you about serving others?

- What has your experience at this school taught you about leadership?

Beta testing consisted of full-length interviews with five participants from my personal and professional network, and these participants represented the following stakeholder perspectives: (a) parent, (b) student, (c) support staff member, (d) teacher, and (e) administrator. Due to restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, I conducted these interviews online using Google Meet. Overall, I found that participant responses to the revised interview protocol sufficiently addressed my research questions. I pondered whether modifications to the language of some questions might encourage participants to tell stories rather than simply provide answers but decided to retain the language of the revised protocol with the following exceptions:

- I found that some participants did not discuss service as part of leadership unless I specifically asked about it, so I added one question and a follow-up question to address this.
- Upon further testing, I found the question about whether people who serve are leaders to be ineffective as a primary question, so I rephrased it as a follow-up question.

A copy of the revised interview protocol is included in Appendix C.

Case Study Interview Data Collection

Data collection for interviews at First Christian consisted of two methods: (a) audio recording and (2) note-taking. Audio recording is commonly used during interviews due to its efficiency in accurately recording the data (Gray, 2004; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2003) and for allowing a researcher to “concentrate on the process of listening, interpreting and re-focusing the interview” (Gray, 2004, p. 227). Though audio

recording provides an efficient and accurate recording of the interview, it inundates researchers with data to parse (Stake, 1995). To address this issue and improve the efficiency of constant-comparative data analysis, I brought a research journal to each interview to record key ideas and potential connections to other data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Gray, 2004).

After securing permission from each participant to record, I recorded each interview using a Zoom H3 recorder, which captures and stores data on SD cards. I used a separate SD card for each interview, stored each in an SD card folio, and locked the folio in a fire-resistant safe at my house. I then imported the audio from each interview was imported into both a local drive on my computer and into MAXQDA, a commercial computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) application, for transcription and analysis. These data were backed up to an encrypted external hard disk.

Field Observations

The purpose of field observations is to provide a researcher with real-time, direct experiences in the environment, which will provide data that could not be obtained through interviews or document review. Researchers can assume a variety of roles during field observations, which are differentiated by the degrees to which (a) researchers participate in the event being observed and (b) the other participants are aware that they are being actively observed (Merriam, 1988; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2003). In each of the eight field observations I conducted, I engaged in direct observation but did not actively participate. Except for the staff training session, wherein I stood at the back and observed the training video, all participants who were potential sources of data collection were aware of my presence and were informed about the purpose of my

presence. Seven of the eight field observations were in-person meetings on campus, and one observation took place via Zoom. I was able to record all field notes during the observations, and these were recorded directly into my research journal.

Document Review

As previously mentioned, the documents of interest to the study were

- the school system constitution,
- the parent/student handbook,
- the employee handbook,
- a staff development plan,
- training documents for the student leadership training program,
- demographic information about the school,
- agendas for board and leadership meetings,
- an organization chart, and
- the "Personal Christlike Assessment."

Other than the meeting agendas and the "Personal Christlike Assessment," which were distributed during those meetings, my point of contact person at First Christian provided all documents. These documents were imported into MAXQDA for analysis.

Data Analysis

As previously mentioned, I primarily used MAXQDA, a commercial CAQDAS software, for analysis. An advantage of CAQDAS software is that documents can be organized into one place for data analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2003), which can increase the efficiency of data analysis. Furthermore, the aggregation of data in CAQDAS software can assist a researcher in developing a case

study database. Yin (2003) asserted the importance of a researcher maintaining a case study database:

> The practice is sufficiently important, however, that every case study project should strive to develop a formal, presentable database, so that in principle, other investigators can review the evidence directly and not be limited to the written case study reports. In this manner, a case study database increases markedly the reliability of the entire case study. (p. 102)

Data analysis consisted of coding and thematic analysis. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) asserted that coding categories and themes could originate with (a) the researcher, (b) the participant's words, and/or (c) pre-existing concepts from relevant literature (p. 211). However, Gray (2004) noted that basing coding only on pre-established categories "can come with pre-existing meanings that can bias the research" (p. 333). Because little research has been conducted on servant leadership in kingdom education-based schools, and the original conception of servant leadership was not developed from observations at kingdom education-based schools, using SLT constructs to code data would preclude me from identifying distinct features of servant leadership at the participant school.

Therefore, the coding process began with in-vivo coding followed by an iterative process of open and axial coding. Although I did not pre-establish themes, the interview protocol was developed with reference to van Dierendonck and Patterson's (2015) framework. As a result, four early coding categories consisted of motive, character traits, acts of service, and follower effects, which closely aligned with van Dierendonck and Patterson's (2015) framework.

Validity and Reliability

As in all scholarly research, validity and reliability are of paramount importance to case study research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2003); a study has no significance if the findings cannot be trusted. To maximize internal validity and reliability, I implemented four methods: (a) triangulation, (b) member checking, (c) discrepant case analysis, and (d) providing an audit trail.

Triangulation

Data triangulation is the most common method of improving validity and reliability in a qualitative study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). Regarding triangulation, Patton (2015) wrote that "it is in data analysis that the strategy of triangulation really pays off, not only in providing diverse ways of looking at the same phenomenon, but in adding to credibility by strengthening confidence in whatever conclusions are drawn" (p. 956). There are multiple forms of triangulation; Denzin (1978) listed four primary types:

- *data triangulation,* wherein a researcher supports analyses with data from different sources;
- *investigator triangulation*, wherein a researcher involves other persons in observation and data collection;
- *theoretical triangulation,* wherein a researcher interprets the findings through multiple theoretical lenses; and
- *methodological triangulation,* wherein a researcher uses different processes to collect data.

I implemented methodological, data, and theoretical triangulation throughout the study:

- Methodological triangulation was inherent in the design of the study, which featured data collection from (a) interviews, (b) field observations, and (c) documents.
- Designing the interview sampling method to require participants from multiple stakeholder roles facilitated data triangulation. Furthermore, data triangulation was a considerable factor in the identification of themes during analysis; the degree to which findings were triangulated is indicated in Chapter 4.
- The discussion of the findings included theoretical triangulation. As previously discussed, one purpose of the present study was to investigate a potential distinction between servant leadership as perceived and practiced in Christian schools and attributes of servant leadership derived from the SLT literature. Therefore, the findings were discussed in reference to principles of biblical leadership and with reference to SLT, noting overlaps and potential distinctions.

Member Checking

Member checking is a process of eliciting feedback from participants as a means of strengthening triangulation (Stake, 1995). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) wrote that member checking consisted of

> [taking] your preliminary analysis back to some of the participants and ask whether your interpretation “rings true.” Although you may have used different

> words (it is *your* interpretation, after all, but derived directly from their experience), participants should be able to recognize their experience in your interpretation or suggest some fine-tuning to better capture their perspectives. (p. 246)

Member checking in this case consisted of informal and formal checks. Informal checks occurred during interviews during follow-up questioning. For example, I would distill participant responses about leadership characteristics into concise lists, repeating these back to them for confirmation and for further clarification. In other instances, I would go back to a point a participant made earlier in an interview, reiterating that point and clarifying whether the participant associated that point with leadership or with serving.

Formal member checking took place in the end stages of analysis as a form of validating the model. For this process, I constructed a brief document containing (a) a bullet-pointed list of the key findings, (b) a graphic depicting the model, and (c) a brief narrative explanation of the model. A copy of this document is included in Appendix D. I then sent an email to six key informants, asking all participants three questions:

- To what degree are the key findings consistent with your thoughts on service as it relates to leadership at First Christian?
- In your opinion, how well does the model (and its accompanying explanation) accurately represent service as a component of leadership at First Christian?
- Are there things I should add or modify?

One component of the model featured more interpretation on my part than other elements: the relationship between personal spiritual development, the work of the Holy Spirit, character development, and acts of service. Therefore, I also posed the following question to four of the participants:

- I am particularly interested in your thoughts on the relationship between personal spiritual development, the work of the Holy Spirit, character development, and acts of service. To what degree do you think that my explanation of that relationship is accurate?

Of the six key informants that I contacted for member checking, three responded. They indicated full agreement with the model and did not recommend substantial changes to the content of the model. However, in one instance, one participant recommended minor clarifications to the "personal spiritual development" component of the model, suggesting that I emphasize that the methods of personal spiritual development I reported were the *primary*, but not only, methods of engaging in personal spiritual development. Additionally, one participant offered some clarification about the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of students. These responses are reflected in Chapters 4 and 5.

Discrepant Case Analysis

Patton (2015) asserted:

> One barrier to credible qualitative findings stems from the suspicion that the analyst has shaped findings according to his or her predispositions and biases. Being able to report that you engaged in a systematic and conscientious search for alternative themes, divergent patterns, and rival explanations enhances credibility" (p. 945).

Many researchers assert the need for one to search for alternative or even contradictory explanations for collected data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Gray, 2004; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, discrepant case analysis contributed to delineating the dual-domain paradigm of leadership at First Christian and to describing the variety of motivations for service. Additionally, I was careful to disclose discrepant explanations for findings.

Providing an Audit Trail

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) wrote that "an audit trail in a qualitative study describes in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry" (p. 252). This process provides a thorough accounting of the case so that a reader can critique a researcher's methodology. If a researcher uses logical and sound methodological processes, providing an audit trail enhances the reliability of the study. The audit trail for this study consists of two components: (a) a case study database and (b) a research journal. The case study database contains all documents, coded interview transcripts, a digitized version of the research journal, and the code book. The research journal contains a chronological record of (a) notes taken during interviews, (b) field notes, (c) interpretations of data, (d) questions that arose during the study, and (e) thoughts on future sampling. This approach was intended to contribute to the audit trail and reflects Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) assertion that research journal should include "[a researcher's] reflections, [a researcher's] questions, and the decisions [a researcher makes] with regard to problems, issues, or ideas [a researcher encounters] in collecting data" (pp. 252-253).

Researcher Bias and Assumptions

In qualitative research, it is incumbent on a researcher to delineate any personal biases or assumptions that might influence the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) asserted that the validity and reliability of a qualitative researcher's findings are strengthened by *reflexivity*:

> Investigators need to explain their biases, dispositions, and assumptions regarding the research to be undertaken. Even in journal articles, authors are being called upon to articulate and clarify their assumptions, experiences, worldview, and theoretical orientation to the study at hand. Such a clarification allows the reader to better understand how the individual researcher might have arrived at the particular interpretation of the data. (p. 249)

A fundamental assumption of this study was that servant leadership principles were both taught and practiced at the site. This assumption was informed by the sampling criteria for the study. I intentionally selected a school system that clearly established itself as aligned with Shultz's (1998) principles of kingdom education and that was fully accredited through ACSI. Because these two criteria required a school to ground its practices in biblical principles, I also assumed that First Christian would clarify the link between servant leadership and biblical leadership principles.

At the time of data collection, I was an administrator and a teacher in a private, Protestant Christian school that is accredited by ACSI. Although my interest in this study was motivated by my intellectual curiosity, especially with regards to theory, my position as a senior leader in a Christian school could have potentially affected my perspective during the study. Since the researcher is the data collection instrument in qualitative

inquiry (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Patton, 2015; Stake, 2010), and since the constant comparative process depends on a researcher's analysis of previously collected data, any effect of my position on my perspectives could impact the methodological choices that I make. Although I could not identify ways that my position influenced this study, maintaining a comprehensive case study database as part of the audit trail will provide others with the data necessary to make this determination.

After primary data collection at First Christian, I accepted an opportunity to serve on an accreditation team for ACSI, though not for the school that I studied. Upon my departure from my post as a Christian school administrator, I became ineligible to participate in further accreditation visits. Since I only used ACSI accreditation as a criterion for site selection, which took place months before I became involved with the organization, it is unlikely that my involvement with ACSI impacted this study.

Additionally, I am a Christian and am actively engaged in studying the Bible. Since any application of the Bible to leadership theories requires some degree of biblical exegesis, and biblical exegesis can vary among researchers, it is plausible that my interpretation of the data could be biased by my interpretations of the meanings of biblical periscopes. To minimize the potential for this bias, I strived to (1) support applications of biblical leadership requiring exegesis with existing literature when available and (2) document alternative exegeses and their implications on the data analysis process when those exegeses are available in the literature.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 2, previous inquiries into attributes of servant leadership in Christian schools used Greenleaf's (1977/2002) servant leadership theory in various capacities, which could have limited the ability of those researchers to identify fundamental differences between servant leadership as perceived and practiced in Christian schools and SLT. This study was designed to investigate these potential distinctions, using the following research questions to guide the study:

- How does servant leadership manifest in leadership training and leadership practice in a Christian school?
- What are the stakeholders' perceptions of servant leadership attributes?
- How do stakeholders perceive that servant leadership is being implemented in a Christian school?
- How do stakeholders believe that servant leadership affects followers?

The present chapter begins with a presentation of the context of the case, followed by a presentation of the findings. Since the present study focused on understanding how members of the First Christian community understood and experienced servant leadership, interview data provided the most significant data on the topic.

Thus, participant data from interviews are prominently featured in the explication of key themes g that emerged from the data. To preserve confidentiality for the participants, I generated a randomized array of numbers from 1 to 37 and assigned the array to the list of participants. Additionally, documents were assigned an identifying number. Therefore, in-text citations in this chapter include a letter to designate the type of source, including "D" for document and "P" for participant, followed by the identifying number. The depth of description included in the present chapter is intended to provide enough detail to facilitate readers' naturalistic generalizations to other contexts while also preserving the anonymity of the school and preserving participant confidentiality.

Context

First Christian School consists of two campuses located approximately 45 minutes apart within a large metropolitan area in the southern region of the United States. The main campus, which provides services to students in grades Pre-K through 12th, is in a suburban city, and the secondary campus, which provided services to students in grades Pre-K through 10th at the time of data collection, is in a smaller township. Additionally, First Christian offers fully online and hybrid learning programs. Table 3 shows demographic data for each physical campus' respective region and for the school system.

Table 3

Demographics for First Christian School System

Criteria	Main Campus	Secondary Campus	School System
Regional Demographics			
Population	290,000	30,000	
Median Household Income	$95,000	$150,000	
Median Home Value	$300,000	$460,000	
Poverty Rate	7%	2.5%	
Racial Composition			
White	65%	83%	
Asian	21%	5%	
Hispanic / Latino	15%	7%	
Black / African American	9%	7%	
School			
Annual Tuition Range			$6,000 - $23,000
% of Students Receiving Tuition Assistance			30%
Population			1,700
Median Household Income			$125,001 - $200,000
Racial Composition			
White			71%
Hispanic			6.9%
Multi-Racial			6.9%
African American			6.5%
Asian / Pacific Islander			6.3%

Note. All values are presented as approximate to preserve the anonymity of the school. Demographic information for the school system was not available at the campus level.

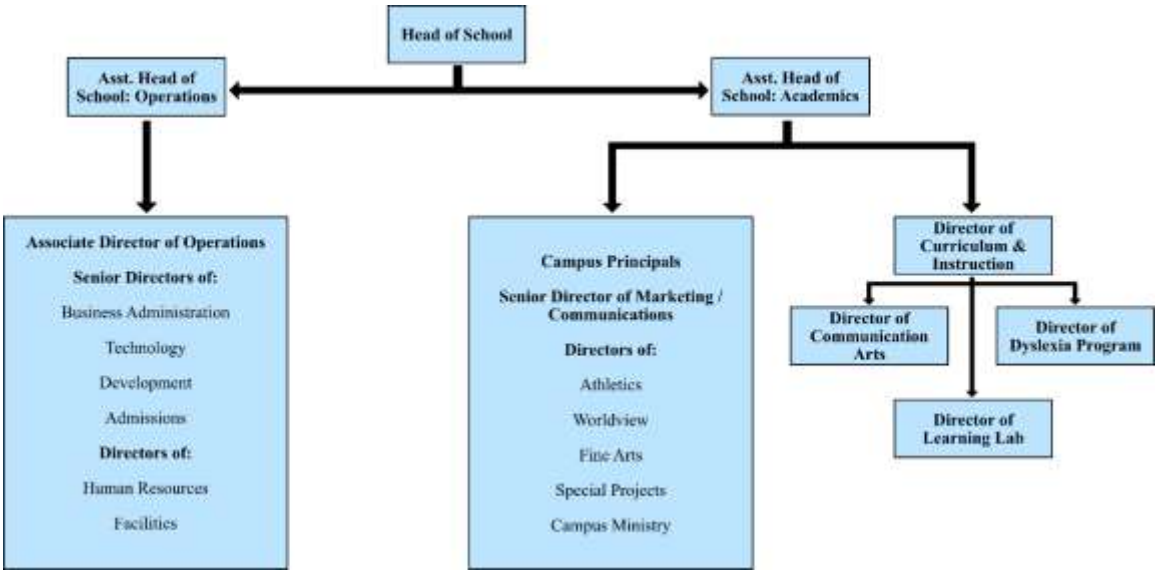
The First Christian School System is described as a ministry of a parent church, though the school system is financially independent of the church. The head of school is considered a senior minister of the church, is a member of the executive team, and reports directly to the senior pastor of the church. The senior pastor of the church approves board

members, who must be members of the church, but the senior pastor is not on the board of trustees. The primary campus is located on the same property as the church, and the two entities collaborate to share physical spaces for church and/or school events as needed.

First Christian has a centralized formal leadership structure, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Formal Leadership Structure of First Christian School System



In addition to the head of school and assistant heads of school, a team of nine directors oversees the operations for the following departments across all campuses and for the online program:

- Technology,
- Admissions,
- Development,
- Marketing and Communication,

- Business Administration,
- Campus Ministry,
- Communication Arts,
- Fine Arts, and
- Athletics.

At the campus level, each principal has an assistant principal; teachers also serve as department leaders for each subject for the elementary, middle, and high schools.

There is a singular board of trustees for the school system, subcommittees of the board for both physical campuses, and a singular subcommittee dedicated to spiritual development for the school system. Overall, the board of trustees serves in an advisory capacity to the leadership team of the school system. Though they vote on issues relevant to the school and provide feedback to the leadership team, the board of trustees carries no decision-making power over the operations of the school.

Although a centralized leadership structure exists, senior leaders at First Christian valued collaborative decision-making, which takes place during numerous and frequent meetings. One administrator described the nature of collaboration on decision-making both as “distributed input” and “collaborative input,” asserting that senior leaders encourage input from all individuals who are involved in meetings and utilize that input to inform decisions. Furthermore, the senior leaders ultimately make the decision, but they strive to build consensus around a decision and offer support to all involved individuals even if consensus cannot be achieved.

First Christian also provides administrative, material, and instructional support to two affiliate schools: one focused on providing localized Christian education to children

in a low-income neighborhood in the city, and one focused on providing Christian education to students with significant learning disabilities. Each of the affiliate schools is functionally independent of First Christian, with each having its own senior leadership staff members and a board of trustees. However, First Christian's head of school serves as the president of the board for each, and the chief operating officer of the school serves as the chief financial officer for each.

Findings

Service was conceived as a fundamental component of, and not a comprehensive model for, a paradigm of leadership that was heavily informed by perceptions about Christ's leadership. Christlikeness was asserted as a core value at First Christian. Operations documents, such as the school's constitution, parent and student handbook, and employee handbook, incorporated variations of the phrase "modeling Christ" as an expectation for employees, students, parents, and board members. Additionally, one of the three components of the school's established mission was to train students to "model Christ-like leadership to influence their homes, churches, and communities for Christ."

At First Christian, personal spiritual development was perceived as a key component of pursuing Christlikeness and was established as a core value of the school. As such, personal spiritual development was included in professional development as a component of "culture training," and the instructional program for students emphasized biblical worldview integration. Personal spiritual development was perceived as primarily consisting of, but not limited to, studying the Bible, prayer, and active involvement in a local church.

There was a strong association between variations of the term service, including servant, servanthood, and servant leadership, and Christ-like leadership. First Christian identified service as another core value of the school, noting in the description of the value the intention to "encourage students to follow Christ's example of leadership through servanthood" (D3). Additionally, First Christian's constitution asserted servanthood as one of three representative traits of Christ's character, First Christian's student leadership training program asserted servant leadership as one of the three pillars of Christian leadership, and 16 interview participants linked service to Christlikeness. One administrator recounted a post from an acquaintance about the Biblical account of Jesus washing the disciples' feet:

> It said: "Sometimes I think about what I would do if I knew it was my last day, about what I'd eat and where I'd go and the fun I'd try and have and all those kind of things, knowing that this was the last opportunity to do all those things." And he said: "It hit me: Jesus knew. He knew that it was his last day, and he washed people's feet." And, that service of others. And, like I say, he's the ultimate example of servant leadership. And, so, I do see [servant leadership and Christ's leadership] like synonymous things. (P19)

The intention with which First Christian School espoused service as part of Christian leadership was also apparent in the educational programs offered to the students. As previously mentioned, Student Leadership Institute, First Christian School's leadership training organization for students, established servant leadership as one of the three pillars of Christian leadership and has developed curricula to discuss servant leadership as part of the training process. Additionally, the school formally integrated

service into the academic program by designating school days for service and by establishing minimester; a multi-day set of service projects, chaperoned by faculty and staff members, where students serve others locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally. Minimester was most often referenced as an example of formal training on Christian service, being discussed in 9 interviews by participants representing support staff member, administrator, parent, and student perspectives.

It is important to note that the paradigm of leadership at First Christian included more than modeling Christ. One administrator articulated a dual-domain perception of leadership, consisting of the spiritual context and soft skills, and though no other participants explicitly discussed leadership using these terms, their discussions of leadership aligned with this paradigm. Although all participants asserted service as imperative for a leader, 15 of the 33 interview participants discussed service only after being directly prompted. Rather, participants often asserted the importance of technical, organizational leadership skills like (a) leading by example, (b) teambuilding, (c) being willing to have hard conversations, (d) taking initiative, (e) listening, (f) providing autonomy for employees, and (g) being visionary. Another administrator spoke of servant leadership as one of many approaches a leader could use: “So there’s a, I mean, there’s tons of leadership theories, servant leadership just being one of those. And, you know, different situations call for different tools, so servant leadership being one of those tools in the tool bag” (p. 24). Though the administrator linked servant leadership to a spiritual domain of leadership, this individual viewed serving as but a component of effective leadership.

Developing a comprehensive framework for the paradigm of leadership at First Christian was beyond the scope of this study, so I specifically focused data analysis on the service component of leadership. However, understanding service as a component of leadership may require acknowledging these two domains; although serving was overall clearly linked to Christlikeness, participants' descriptions of service included technical components, indicating an overlapping relationship between the two domains. The nature of this relationship is discussed in Chapter 5.

Participant discussions of service as implemented at First Christian included perceptions about (a) motivations for serving, (b) dispositions associated with service, and (c) acts of service. The following sections expound on these categories, including subcategories and associations between categories where appropriate.

Motivations for Serving

Conceptually speaking, participants mostly described motives for serving that aligned with the spiritual domain of leadership. Modeling Christ was a motive for serving, but participants also discussed the involvement of the Holy Spirit in being motivated to serve. A staff member noted that the attitude of service emanates from "the overflow of the Spirit in their life" (P7), and an administrator asserted:

> And I do it not out of flesh but because of the Holy Spirit and God providing that because out of the flesh, I don't possess any of that. I'm not a selfish person: I can get you help but let me go get somebody to help you. It's just: I'm like go, go, go, go, go. I'm the "let's get it fixed. Let's do. Let's organize. Let's talk." But the serving part is so important for your faculty to see that, for your parents, for your students. And, so, that's why I always tell my students when they say: "Oh, well,

> I'm not mission-minded." I'm like: None of us are by flesh. We're all about ourselves. That's just human nature. But when we operate with Christ through us, that's when it just flows outside of us, and we fall in love with serving others and giving and whatever we need to do. That's the work of the Holy Spirit in us. (P32)

Similarly, one student asserted the importance of being convicted by the Holy Spirit to serve, stating:

> Well, I mean, [laughs], the Bible sets up Jesus as the ultimate servant in how he went and helped the sick and helped the poor and ate with the beggars and the sinners. And so, here, we're taught: "Oh, be like Jesus." And just: "Go help people because that's what Jesus would do." But the most important reason is that we're supposed to be an example of Jesus, not just because we should be obligated to do it because Jesus did it. We should feel the conviction. Because all the people that you see that are successful in serving others and are the epitome of servanthood: They weren't obligated to serve. They were convicted to serve. (P2)

However, another participant suggested that the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the individual was not ubiquitous among the student population. Although the participant asserted that many students were believers in Christ and were subject to the work of the Holy Spirit, the participant also expressed the perspective that a large minority of the student population espoused Christian ideologies for social and academic purposes, stating that the Holy Spirit was not actively working in their lives.

From a practical implementation perspective, participants described being motivated to serve in three ways: (a) by observing service modeled by leaders at First Christian, (b) by receiving service, and (c) by receiving formal training in service. Nine

participants, who represented student, alumni, administrator, parent, and support staff perspectives, reported being motivated to serve because the leaders modeled service. One participant, who spoke from the perspective of a student who was served during a family tragedy, asserted that

> what started with [the head of school] and the administration and the teachers trickles down to the students and families at [First Christian School] too, to where they want to walk with people. They want to bear each other's burdens… They would participate in the work of [a local nonprofit organization] on the weekends and donations and volunteering. And so, I know there are plenty of other teachers who worked with other nonprofit organizations, and so it's just the -- You can see that it's in the heart and the DNA of the school and the administrators and the teachers to serve and to love and to be the hands and feet of Jesus, who's the ultimate servant leader. (P10)

Similarly, during a discussion of how service is manifested in a support staff member's department, the support staff member stated that coworkers serve each other "because [coworkers] do that for us. Where does that come from? Because leadership does that" (P16).

Like the support staff member, students reported being motivated to serve by the service they received from teachers and other students. One student asserted that "seeing the way other people love each other here, and the teachers serve us: It makes you want to do that too" (P33). Another student recounted a specific example of reciprocation, stating that a teacher at the school had begun to teach the student in an area of the student's interest despite the student not being in the teacher's class, which culminated in

the teacher recommending the student for internship experiences in that field. As a result, during a period when the teacher was away from the campus on school business, the student volunteered to teach those skills in the teacher's absence, noting "because she had been such a servant and had gone out of her way to help me, I was able to basically help her. And so, I'd say that was a pretty big deal" (P2).

This motivation also extended beyond employees and students to parents. One parent, when asked about what they had learned about service from their involvement with First Christian, responded

> It's helped me a lot. Directly and indirectly, but just seeing the grace and the love that's given to my child has helped me turn that around and give it to the world around me as well. And, to really be thoughtful and mindful with the words that I choose to use. Just, it kind of changes your disposition as a whole. When you're treated with some of those fruits of the Spirit, they just continue to multiply, you know? (P27)

Overall, the motivation to reciprocate service to others was the most common effect of experiencing service at First Christian. It was discussed by 11 participants representing the following perspectives: administrator, board member, student, and support staff member.

Additionally, participants identified students' participation in minimester as a source of motivation for future service, though this was less discussed than the above motivations. Two participants, both representing administrator perspectives, recounted stories of students who opted to volunteer on their own time at locations where they previously served during minimester, asserting that minimester had engendered a desire

in those students to continue serving those specific communities. However, one participant suggested that this outcome may not have been realized by all students at First Christian.

Although the above motivations are all associated with the spiritual domain of leadership, one participant asserted that serving allowed a leader to gain an awareness of the circumstances surrounding the work of those whom they lead, thus allowing them to make more informed decisions within their area of responsibility. This reflected a motivation that is technical in nature, and although this assertion was unique to this individual, it demonstrated that motivations for serving were not unanimously perceived as spiritual in nature.

Dispositions Associated with Service

One theme was that leaders should possess a certain set of *dispositions* to be effective servants. These attributes were grouped because of a shared quality. Each of them was inferred by participants based on observations of specific acts of service. The four most discussed were (a) humility, (b) selflessness, (c) caring about others, and (d) loving others. Like the connection between service and Christlikeness, there was a strong association between these four dispositions and the perception of Christlike character. In the center of the First Christian campus, in a courtyard overlooking a pond with a fountain in the middle, is a large statue depicting Jesus washing the disciples' feet. This statue, referenced by two administrators during interviews, was described in First Christian's constitution as demonstrating an "act of authentic humility in which Jesus models the selfless love that truly influences people." However, there was considerable

overlap between these constructs. The following sections expound on each individually and note ways in which the constructs overlapped.

Humility

The terms "humility" and "humble" appeared in 21 data sources, including (a) the school's constitution, (b) the parent-student handbook, (c) the staff module, (d) a student leadership training document, and (e) 16 interviews from participants representing the following perspectives: administrator, teacher, board member, support staff, parent, and student. Humility was discussed as a component of Christ's character in (a) the school's handbook, (b) constitution, (c) student leadership training document, and (d) seven interviews with participants representing the following perspectives: administrator, board member, support staff, and student. Humility was discussed as associated with service in (a) the school's handbook, (b) the school's constitution, and (c) nine interviews with participants representing the following perspectives: administrator, board member, support staff, parent, alumni, and student.

Humility was designated as a primary character trait that the school wanted to engender among students; First Christian's constitution and parent/student handbook asserted that humility was cultivated by a reverence for God and a recognition that one's purpose is to work "to please and honor God." In participant discussions, humility was conceptualized as not being ego-driven, lacking pride, and understanding that "it's not about me" (p. 36). Acts of service that were perceived as evidence of humility included a leader (a) being willing to accomplish organizational tasks outside of their job description and particularly jobs that could be considered below their position, (b) being willing to

work behind the scenes rather than receiving recognition for their work, and (c) working alongside followers rather than delegating work to them.

Selflessness

Selflessness appeared in 15 data sources, including (a) First Christian's constitution, (b) parent-student handbook, (c) "Personal Christlikeness Assessment" document, and (d) 12 interviews with participants representing the following perspectives: administrator, teacher, student, alumni, board member, and support staff member. Selflessness was discussed directly in relation to Christ's character in (a) First Christian's constitution, (b) parent-student handbook, and (c) two interviews from participants representing the administrator and board member perspectives. Selflessness was discussed directly in relation to service in eight interviews with participants representing the following perspectives: administrator, teacher, student, alumni, board member, and support staff member. Overall, participants conceived of selflessness as being others-centered. This meant making decisions and engaging in behaviors in the best interests of students, employees, the institution, or the community. For participants, evidence of selflessness included (a) sacrificing their own needs, (b) being willing to engage in tough conversations for the betterment of a student, and (c) displaying enthusiasm for serving other people.

As previously mentioned, there was considerable overlap between the constructs selflessness and humility. Selflessness consisted of focusing on the needs of others, and focusing on the needs of others was evidence of humility. The First Christian constitution and parent-student handbook included a distinction between the two constructs, asserting that humility was an impetus for one to "demonstrate the love and attitude of Christ" by

exuding selflessness, engaging in service, and being obedient to God. However, participants did not make this distinction.

Caring about Others

Caring about others appeared in 15 interviews with participants representing the following perspectives: administrator, teacher, student, alumni, support staff member, and board member. Caring about others was discussed as specifically associated with service in 11 interviews with participants representing the following perspectives: administrator, teacher, student, alumni, and support staff member. One administrator asserted that

> the very definition of serving, and being a servant leader, serving as His leader, is that you care about each of the stakeholders. You're really trying to connect with their heart, and it's not a transactional "hey, we're here to teach and coach and then help kids get to college." But we're really trying to connect with their heart, and I think that's where the servant leader has to come in. If we're not yielding and serving the Lord, then I don't know if we're truly gonna be able to connect those different stakeholders. (P36)

At First Christian specifically, another participant attributed the long tenure of faculty members to caring for others, remarking that the faculty members' "longevity is a sign of, one, that those are people that genuinely care about other people, and then, two, that our administration and the people that we work for genuinely care about us" (P20).

Caring about stakeholders was a focus as First Christian, as evidenced by its inclusion as a core objective for school culture training in the 2020-2021 Staff Training Module document, which provided an overview of the three-year professional development schedule for employees. Caring about students was the theme of a

professional development seminar that occurred during data collection, which featured a video on how to care for students who are part of vulnerable populations. In the video, which was focused on how to become a safe adult for students, the speaker asserted that educators needed to gain awareness of and connect students with resources to meet their material and relational needs, asserting listening as an important way to make connections with and set appropriate expectations for children. Regarding discipline in the classroom, the presenter affirmed the importance of strong relationships, stating that "correction only effectively happens after connection."

When sharing evidence of caring about others, participants often described acts of service that were organized into two subcategories, developing relationships with others and serving others, though the constructs overlapped. For participants, developing relationships with others consisted of engaging in conversations with stakeholders in their sphere of influence and getting to know them on a personal level. Behaviors associated with developing relationships included inquiring about stakeholders' personal lives and listening to their responses. One administrator discussed conducting one-on-one meetings with teachers, inquiring about "their husband, their children, where they went to high school, where they went to college, what's their passions, where they go to church, just their hobbies, their interests" (P29), which allowed the administrator to get to know them as a person and "not just as an employee."

Listening, a behavior directly identified both with leadership and with serving, was identified as a key component of relationship-building conversations; the construct was discussed in 27 unique instances across 19 data sources, including 2 documents and 17 interviews. For the participants, listening was a catalyst for service: Through listening,

a leader could identify another's needs or identify opportunities to serve. Then, an effective leader serves by providing resources or accommodations to meet those needs. One administrator shared a story from 2 Kings to elaborate on the connection between listening and service, noting that Rehoboam would have united, rather than divided, the kingdom of Israel if he had listened to and acted upon the recommendations of his advisers to lighten the workload of the working class of Israel rather than asserting his power.

In addition to listening, one teacher asserted that developing relationships also consisted of being willing to discuss one's personal life:

> I obviously can't share all parts of my life with my students because we're not on that intimate level. That's what I have my best friends and my family for. But I try to share as much as I can with my students, and so I think that it would be an ineffective leader to kind of hide off the personal lens. (P20)

Similarly, an administrator asserted the value of a "mutual sharing of stories" (P24) as a means of empathizing with another person's circumstances.

Loving Others

Twelve participants, representing the administrator, student, alumni, parent, and support staff member perspectives, associated loving others with service. Unlike the other dispositions, participants did not clearly describe this disposition, and discussions of this disposition overlapped with discussions of caring about others. Five participants discussed caring for others and loving others in tandem. Additionally, participants described developing relationships with others, serving, and encouraging as evidence of both caring for others and loving others. However, it was apparent from the data that

some participants viewed caring for others and loving others as conceptually distinct. In 5 of the 12 interviews, participants used both terms near one another and not interchangeably. Since no participants delineated the difference between the two, their relationship beyond coincidence was unclear.

Other Acts of Service

In addition to the aforementioned acts of service, which were identified as evidence of dispositions associated with serving, participants discussed other instantiations of service. As previously discussed, many participants indicated the perception that leaders serve by simply identifying and meeting the needs of the people under their influence, which was closely associated with the perception that leaders care about, develop relationships with, and invest in those whom they lead. Specific instantiations of service involved ways that leaders provided support for others, which included provisions for both personal and professional needs. A support staff member described how, after giving birth, the leader of her department accommodated her desire for additional time at home after maternity leave by allowing her to work from home. One student discussed how the teachers accommodated for a recent surgery:

> I had missed a bunch of classes because I had to do physical therapy, and so it was really stressing me out, like projects that were all due. And so, my English teacher, [redacted] specifically, made different time slots each day where I would come in, and she would tutor me one-on-one and go over again what she had already gone over in class, which she didn't have to do. But she told me that she wanted to do that because she just wanted me to understand and not just worry

> about the grade. She wanted me to get what everyone else was getting and didn't want that to be different just because of my circumstances. (P33)

Similarly, one parent noted that when a health condition emerged that required the parent's child to be hospitalized for more than one week:

> The school just took us in -- because I didn't work here. The biggest thing, and [redacted] will say this now, she says "they didn't have me make up any homework." And that was huge. But she did really well in school, and she still loves school. She'd get her doctorate today if she continued. She loves school. But, that was a huge thing, and it still comes to her mind. She's like: "Oh my gosh. Under all that stress, I didn't have to." (P28)

A prominent point of discussion among participants was how individuals at First Christian provided support to others when others had lost family members. One staff member noted that, upon the death of the staff member's parents, coworkers were willing to take on extra responsibilities so the staff member could tend to personal matters. One participant, an alumnus of First Christian, recounted:

> I had a classmate whose mom passed away when I was a junior in high school, and seeing just the [First Christian] family surround them and bear burdens, right, and be there with them, and to walk alongside them, and to make adjustments in school assignments, and to work around things. And just, going there my whole life, I've seen so many people walk through trials, and in those trials, [First Christian] is always there. They're making accommodations. They're walking with them and helping really bear that burden with them as they push forward. So, I think in the tribulations and the trials, that's when you see the body of Christ

> most active, if it's the true body of Christ. And I always saw that in First Christian. (P10)

In this regard, multiple faculty and staff members mentioned the recent passing of a staff member due to a long-term illness. One participant noted that staff members would take time during the workday to help the family of the staff member, and a teacher stated that a group of teachers who worked in that teacher's department would assist them at school, "praying with them, serving them, helping them" (P31). More specific acts of service included (a) encouragement, (b) prayer, (c) doing the little things, and (d) giving time for others. The following sections expound upon each example.

Encouragement

Seventeen participants, representing parent, teacher, alumni, board member, administrator, and support staff member perspectives, identified encouragement, a behavior also discussed both as a requirement for leaders and as evidence both of caring about and of loving others, as an act of service. The term encouragement was primarily used to describe two distinct phenomena: (a) "lifting others up" (P27) through affirmation and reassurance, and (b) advising others. Of the two, participants more often discussed lifting others up as an act of service.

In some instances, participants described handwritten notes or emails as forms of encouragement. One administrator discussed handing out handwritten notes during people's birthdays, while another participant, recounting the previous year of teaching, described an email initiative consisting of sending positive notes about students to their parents:

> I got such a payback from that, and I had virtually no difficult parent interactions last year because it was all prefaced by positive parent interaction. When we did have issues, they had probably gotten an email already from me, and we'd established a relationship. And it started off as "this is gonna be a good thing for parents. They'll enjoy this." In the end, it was "I'm doing something to pour into these kids." (P19)

From the receiving end, one administrator described receiving a handwritten note from the head of school, noting that it meant a lot and that the administrator had it tacked up on a bulletin board to read "just when I need encouragement" (P4).

Participants also described verbal forms of encouragement, including affirmations, reassurance, and showing gratitude. A board member stated that verbal encouragement could be as simple as saying thank you, showing gratitude for the work that the board member was doing. A support staff member asserted the showing of gratitude as commonplace at First Christian, stating that "there is an abundance of appreciation, an abundance of things, an abundance of need that once met is greatly appreciated here. And that fills up your tank" (P34).

Doing the Little Things

Sixteen participants, representing the student, teacher, administrator, and support staff member perspectives, used a variation of the phrase doing the little things to describe acts of service. Discussions of this concept included a wide variety of service behaviors, which were intertwined with the dispositions humility and caring about others. The most prominent examples of doing the little things involved accomplishing menial tasks behind the scenes, which was associated with the disposition humility. One

administrator discussed noticing that the first person to arrive in the administrator's department office would turn on the lights and unlock all the office doors. To this administrator, it was "just a nice way to say: 'Hey, good morning. Thinking about you'" (p. 24). In another instance, a student discussed noticing an employee who would consistently pick up trash in the bathrooms and clean tables between lunch shifts, opining that "older people in general… do a good job of serving even when it's not to their benefit and when they won't be seen" (P8).

Praying for Others

Fifteen participants, representing the administrator, teacher, parent, and support staff member perspective, discussed praying for others as an act of service, particularly in times of personal difficulty and within the context of interpersonal relationships. One staff member recounted taking time to pray over a coworker's martial struggles, and a support staff member described a coworker who would email prayer requests for students to the staff member, "[guarding] the kids and what they're struggling with" (p. 7). Other First Christian employees kept prayer lists to systematically pray for others. One participant, speaking from the perspective of a student, recalled a teacher keeping a prayer list of students:

> She will literally write down each of her students' names on a notecard, and every morning, as she drives to school, she has this stack of notecards in her car. And she pulls out a notecard; she prays for that student by name; puts the notecard down; pulls out another card; prays for that student by name. (P18)

Giving Time for Others

The most discussed examples of service involved a sacrifice or a dedication of time to help meet others' needs. Fifteen participants, representing the student, teacher, alumni, board member, and support staff member, described giving time for others as an act of service. This concept was also the most discussed example of service among students.

Summary

At First Christian School, serving was established as a core value, informed both by the belief that Jesus, as a leader, modeled service for his disciples and by the belief that leaders in a Christian environment should reflect Jesus' approach to leadership. This includes Christlike dispositions humility, selflessness, caring for others, and loving others, which are primarily exhibited through a leader's service. Humility is demonstrated through more organizational service, wherein a leader is willing to accomplish any task, whether in his or her job description or not, with little expectation of recognition. Selflessness, caring for others, and loving others were demonstrated primarily by serving in the context of interpersonal relationships, which consisted of (a) developing relationships with followers, (b) identifying their professional and personal needs, and (c) meeting or providing resources to meet those needs. Other examples of serving by a leader include making time to serve others, encouraging others, praying with and for others, and doing little things in service of others.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the perceptions and practices of servant leadership in a Christian school context, with a particular focus on identifying attributes of servant leadership that were unique to the Christian context. Four questions were developed to guide this inquiry:

- How does servant leadership manifest in leadership training and leadership practice in a Christian school?
- What are the stakeholders' perceptions of servant leadership attributes?
- How do stakeholders perceive that servant leadership is being implemented in a Christian school?
- How do stakeholders believe that servant leadership affects followers?

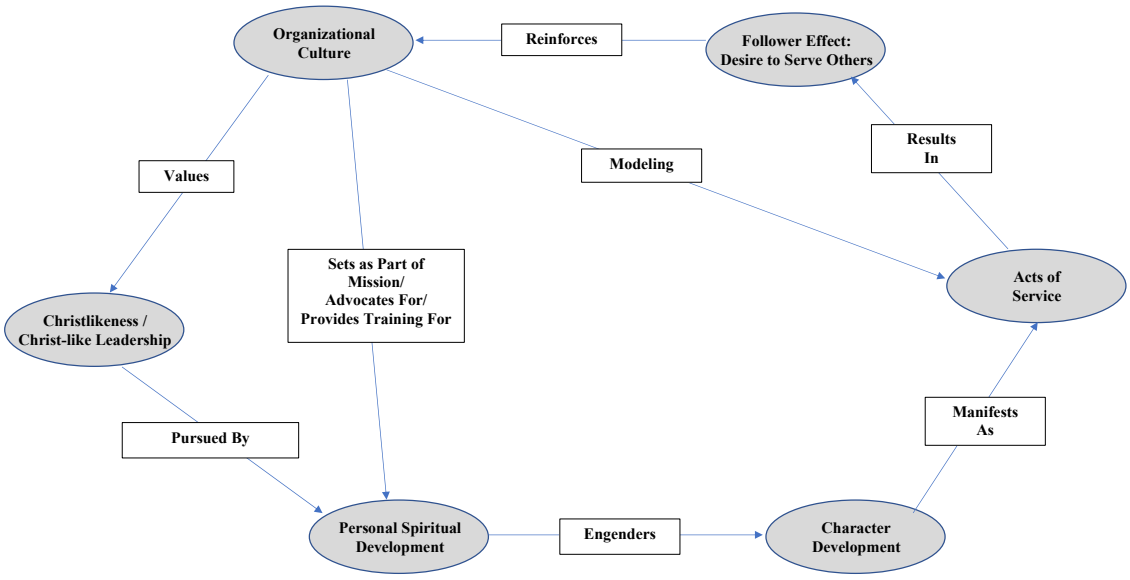
As discussed in Chapter 4, service was conceived not as a comprehensive model of leadership but as a fundamental component of a broader paradigm of leadership consisting of two overlapping domains: a spiritual domain, characterized as "Christlike leadership," and a technical domain consisting of "soft skills." As a component of this leadership paradigm, serving laid at the intersection of both the spiritual and technical domains. The concept of serving as part of leadership was theologically grounded in the conception of Christ as a servant leader, but participant descriptions of acts of service by

leaders included “soft skills” associated with the technical domain. This indicates a complementary relationship between the two domains. While Christlike leadership was the fundamental model of leadership affirmed and taught at First Christian, the “soft skills” of leadership practice were used to implement Christlike leadership in an organization.

However, the paradigm of leadership at First Christian was more complex than simply adhering to Christ’s model of leadership by serving. My model for service as a component of leadership, which is depicted in Figure 2, includes the components associated with Christlikeness and serving and demonstrates the relationships between them. The next sections discuss (a) how these components address the research questions, (b) how these components relate to the literature on servant leadership in Christian schools, and (c) how these components relate to the attributes of SLT. Then, I discuss the implications of this study for practitioners in Christians schools and for future inquiry into leadership in Christian schools.

Figure 2

Model of Service as a Component of Leadership



Christlikeness and Organizational Culture

The model of service as a component of leadership begins with an organizational culture that establishes Christlikeness as a core value for all stakeholders, including the principle that leaders should seek to reflect Christ's model of leadership, which is characterized by servanthood. As discussed in Chapter 2, previous qualitative inquiries into servant leadership in Christian schools found that administrators' perceptions of servant leadership were informed by Christ's model of leadership (Prior, 2018; Striepe & O'Donoghue, 2014; Temperley, 2016), and this was also found in the current study. In aggregate, this finding adds to a body of evidence that Christlike leadership is a prominent leadership paradigm in Christian schools. However, as is discussed in the implications for future research, the degree to which this paradigm exists in all Christian schools cannot be determined from this evidence.

In comparison to previous studies, the perspective of service as a component of Christ's leadership was more ingrained into First Christian's organizational culture than was previously found. This perspective was incorporated into the core values First Christian; was included in student training on leadership; was depicted in a statue on campus; and was expressed by individuals representing administrator, parent, alumni, board member, support staff member, and student perspectives. Thus, although service was a fundamental component of the leadership paradigm, Christ's model of leadership, rather than servant leadership, was the central focus of leadership study, training, and practice at First Christian. This reflects a biblical approach to leadership, for Christ's leadership was illustrated and described using narratives from the Gospels.

This constitutes a significant departure from servant leadership theory, which characterizes the underlying motive for serving as either an inherent desire to serve (Greenleaf, 1977/2002; Keith, 2015; Spears, 2000/2010) or compassionate love (van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). As noted in Chapter 4, participants contradicted the idea that one had an inherent desire to serve, noting Christlikeness as the primary motive for serving and identifying the work of the Holy Spirit as the source of a conviction to serve. Since the motive to serve is clearly part of the spiritual domain of leadership, and since the elements of service in a Christian school, which are discussed below, also reflect the spiritual domain of leadership, it is evident that the conception of service in a Christian school has a uniquely theological foundation that is not reflected in servant leadership theory.

Personal Spiritual Development

At First Christian, becoming Christlike, and becoming a Christlike leader, included investing in one's own spiritual development, which primarily included but was not limited to studying the Bible, praying, and involving oneself in a local church. These findings coincide with Banke et al. (2012), wherein the administrators cited studying the Bible, praying, and church experiences as influential to their spirituality, and with Harrison and Allen (2012), who reported a perspective that Christian leaders demonstrate a commitment to personal spiritual development. Additionally, personal spiritual development was central to the mission of First Christian being infused both into staff training and into student instruction; this finding is consistent with previous findings (Banke et al., 2012; Harrison & Allen, 2012; Striepe & O'Donoghue, 2014) and aligns with the Great Commission, wherein Jesus instructed his followers to engage others in spiritual discipleship (*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version,* 2001/2007, Matthew 28:16-20).

Another key component of personal spiritual development is the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the individual. At First Christian, participants noted that the conviction to serve was a result of the work of the Holy Spirit in one's life, but they did not offer specific insights into the processes that linked the work of the Holy Spirit to the desire to serve. In the literature, some have associated the work of the Holy Spirit with character development: The Apostle Paul's list of the fruits of the Spirit (*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version,* 2001/2007, Galatians 5:22-23) reflect godly character traits (Barrick, 2010; Crowther, 2017; Montaudon-Tomas, 2019), and Barrick (2010) asserted that the work of the Holy Spirit, which Barrick (2010) called "sanctification," involved

transforming an individual into the image of Christ. However, this association is not unanimous in the pneumatological literature; more theological development is needed to clarify this association.

Additionally, as mentioned in Chapter 4, one participant asserted that a "large minority" of the student population were "nominal Christians" who did not have the Holy Spirit working in their lives. These students merely espoused the First Christian culture but were not spiritually affected by it. This could indicate that although participants representing four different stakeholder perspectives associated the work of the Holy Spirit with serving, and three participants agreed with the model and its explanation, for some students and perhaps for others there is a disconnect between their theological understandings regarding the work of the Holy Spirit and their personal experience with the work of the Holy Spirit. While there is ample evidence to suggest a perception that the work of the Holy Spirit is connected to serving, thus still being appropriate to include in this model, this potential disconnect is important to note.

Overall, the concept that personal spiritual development results in the desire to serve is unique to the Christian context. As previously mentioned, Greenleaf (1977/2002) asserted that the primary motive to serve is a natural inclination, but this stands in contrast to the current model. Greenleaf's (1977/2002) assertion implies an exclusionary characteristic: Not all leaders have a natural desire to serve. Thus, not all leaders can be servant leaders in Greenleaf's (1977/2002) model. However, the current model suggests that anyone can be a leader who serves, for the inclination to serve manifests from spiritual development, which is accessible to all.

Character Development

The result of personal spiritual development is the development of Christlike character traits through which acts of service manifest. At First Christian, these character traits consisted of humility, selflessness, loving others, and caring about others. These findings expand on previous inquiries into servant leadership in Christian schools for these specific character traits were not previously noted as associated with serving. From a biblical perspective, humility and love are foundational Christlike characteristics. Christ instructed that his disciples should model his love for them, asserting that people would know they were disciples because of the love they exhibited (*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version,* 2001/2007, John 13:34-35).

Humility was described as the antithesis of pride (*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version,* 2001/2007, 1 Peter 5:5; Proverbs 11:2; Proverbs 18:12) and as imperative for Christians (*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version,* 2001/2007, 1 Peter 5:5, Luke 14:7-11, Philippians 2:3). Additionally, the Apostle Paul alluded to an interconnected relationship between humility and selflessness, or being "others-centered," noting in his letter to the church members in Philippi that through humility they should value others above themselves and look to others' interests (*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version,* 2001/2007, Philippians 2:3-4).

Caring about others is more difficult to explain. As discussed in Chapter 4, caring about others was conceptually intertwined with loving others, but participants did not use the terms interchangeably, which suggests that the participants perceived a distinction between them. From a biblical perspective, loving others requires caring about them and wanting to satisfy their needs (*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version,* 2001/2007,

1 John 3:16-18). However, more research is needed to understand how loving others and caring about others are conceptually distinct.

Humility, selflessness, love, and caring about others are all associated with SLT. Humility has been noted as both a virtuous trait associated with SLT (Page & Wong, 2000; Patterson, 2003; van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015) and as a potential variable that could predict servant leadership (Eva et al., 2019). Page and Wong's (2000) framework included humility as a criterion, which could account for Temperley (2016) finding humility when other previous studies of servant leadership characteristics in Christian schools had not.

Selflessness, or being "other-centered," is reflected in the SLT literature by the construct altruism: Prioritizing the needs and welfare of others (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Eva et al., 2019; van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). As discussed in Chapter 2, Martin (2018) used Barbuto and Wheeler's (2006) instrument, which included altruistic calling as an item, to investigate servant leadership in ACSI-accredited Christian schools, finding that teachers perceived their leaders as demonstrating altruistic calling.

Greenleaf (1977/2002) described love as a necessary component of serving others, associating it with his assertion that servant leaders have an "unlimited liability" for tending to the needs of others. Acknowledging the variance in definitions of love, Patterson (2003, 2006) argued that agapao love, or moral love, is a precursor for service. Van Dierendonck and Patterson (2015) included this in a theoretical model, specifically citing the compassion component of agapao love as the precursor. The current model repositions love as a character trait that results from personal spiritual development. This expands on van Dierendonck and Patterson's (2015) model, for this model provides a

context for developing the love that manifests in service. However, studies of servant leadership in Christian schools have not used measures of SLT that were built upon these frameworks; as a result, the studies did not find love as a component of service in leadership.

Like the findings of this study, caring for others coincides with loving others (Greenleaf, 1977/2002; Patterson, 2003; van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015), but the relationship between the two characteristics is unclear. For example, Patterson (2003) argued that servant leaders show their love for others by demonstrating care. While this shows a link between the two characteristics while also suggesting a conceptual distinction, Patterson (2003) did not compare the two.

Although the characteristics identified with service in this study overlap with SLT, the current model contextualizes these characteristics in a distinctly spiritual context. Understanding the importance of these characteristics for a leader in a Christian school requires examining them through a biblical lens. The current model proposes that these character traits are not simply possessed by a leader but are cultivated through personal spiritual development. Current SLT models do not include this process. Therefore, using SLT measures to study service in Christian schools can result in identifying these characteristics but cannot provide the spiritual context necessary to fully understand how or why these characteristics are cultivated.

Acts of Service

My model proposes that acts of service are a manifestation of Christlike character in a leader. This was inferred from participants' discussions of specific examples of service for they inferred character traits based upon experiencing these acts of service.

The concept that acts of service emanate from character is consistent with van Dierendonck and Patterson's (2015) conceptual model of SLT, but this concept is not ubiquitous in the SLT literature. However, this finding is consistent with the biblical concept that behavior emanates from character (*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*, 2001/2007, Luke 6:43-45; Galatians 5:16-26).

Many of the acts of service noted by participants reflected the technical domain, or "soft skills," of leadership, which consist of collaborative, people-oriented behaviors (Aldulaimi, 2018; Ariratana et al., 2015; Brungardt, 2011). These included (a) listening, (b) developing relationships with followers, (c) identifying and meeting followers' personal and professional needs, (d) making time for followers, and (e) encouraging followers. These acts of service are consistent with SLT (Greenleaf, 1977/2002).

Prayer, an act of service associated with the spiritual domain of leadership, was noted as a component of leadership in previous studies of servant leadership in Christian schools (Banke et al., 2012; Temperley, 2016). However, the role of prayer is more extensive than previously found. Whereas Banke et al. (2012) and Temperley (2016) found prayer to be a necessary practice for servant leaders in Christian schools, participants in the current study also identified prayer as an act of service. This act of service is consistent with the follower-focused nature of SLT but is distinctly spiritual.

Effects of Service

At First Christian, acts of service were self-replicating. Recipients of and observers of acts of service reported being inspired to serve others, which indicates that serving induces a motivation to serve. A secondary effect of serving was that recipients and observers of service perceived a culture of service at First Christian, specifically

noting that senior leaders modeled service such that serving trickled down throughout the organization. What is clear from this finding is that the service component of First Christian's organizational culture was reinforced by service. However, what is unclear is the degree to which serving reinforced the core value of Christlikeness or the organizational mission, which were also identified as part of the organizational culture. These findings are consistent with Greenleaf's (1977/2002) assertion that effective servant leaders engender service among followers.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study could be used by Christian school leaders in three ways. First, Christian school leaders could use the model to develop or refine their mission statements, vision statements, professional development, and student instruction. Although pursuing Christlikeness was noted as the primary motive for serving, there was evidence that serving was a result of, and not a method for, that pursuit. Since Christian schools focus on the spiritual formation of their staff and students (Association of Christian Schools International, 2018/2020; Banke et al., 2012; Harrison & Allen, 2012; Striepe & O'Donoghue, 2014), it may be important for leaders to clarify the relationship between service and Christlikeness, particularly focusing on personal spiritual development, the work of the Holy Spirit, and subsequent character development. These components were significant to understanding the spiritual context of leadership, so explicitly teaching these associations could help staff and students distinguish service in Christian contexts from service in secular contexts. My model clarifies that relationship, so it could be of use to leaders for that purpose.

Second, the finding that some students espoused the theological tenets of First Christian culture while apparently not engaging in spiritual development could be useful to Christian school practitioners. Since spiritual formation is a key component of Christian schools, a disconnect between theological understanding and personal engagement in spiritual development indicates a need to refine the methods by which school personnel attempt to engage students, and perhaps staff members, in spiritual development. Practitioners in Christian schools could use this information to inform inquiries into the prevalence of this disconnect among their student and staff populations, using that information to refine both their school missions and the methods by which they attempt to align their schools with those missions.

Finally, Christian school leaders could benefit from understanding the relationship between the spiritual and technical domains of leadership. Christian leaders are expected to ground their leadership practices in biblical teaching (Association of Christian Schools International, 2018/2020), which can lead to them using Scripture to justify otherwise secular leadership practices (Kessler, 2013). While it is important for a Christian to align his or her leadership practices with that of Christ, it is also important to note that Christ was leading others in a spiritual movement, not a modern organization. Therefore, while it is necessary to ensure that the “soft skills” of organizational leadership complement the spiritual context of leadership, it is reasonable for Christian leaders to draw from the extensive secular leadership literature to select the soft skills that will allow them to effectively implement Christlike leadership in a modern organization.

Implications for Future Research

The focus of this study was to investigate servant leadership as perceived and practiced in a Christian school, and it was clear that *servant leadership* was primarily a descriptor for Christlike leadership at First Christian. When combined with Prior (2018), Striepe and O'Donoghue (2014), and Temperley (2016), there is some evidence that Christlike leadership may be the dominant leadership paradigm in Christian schools, both Catholic and Protestant, in Australia and the United States. However, the qualitative methodology of these studies limits the degree to which the findings can be generalized to all Christian schools; more study is needed to determine the degree to which Christian schools espouse Christlike leadership as a prominent leadership paradigm.

Additionally, a comprehensive framework for Christlike leadership needs development. Christ's leadership is often described through the lenses of secular leadership theories such as servant leadership (Crowther, 2018; Jones, 2014; Kgatle, 2017; Nsiah, 2013; Patterson, 2014), transformational leadership (Anderson, 2004; Wilson, 2010), relational leadership (Breed & Niemandt, 2013), and leader-member exchange (Dose, 2006; Wilson, 2010). However, as shown in this study, there were spiritual characteristics, which were centered around Christ's leadership, that distinguished serving as a leader in a Christian context from servant leadership in other contexts, and previous studies focused on reconciling these potential distinctions with SLT (Harrison & Allen, 2012; Striepe & O'Donoghue, 2014; Temperley, 2016). This may also be the case with other leadership theories. Other descriptions of Christ's leadership are extracted from the Bible via exegesis, but variations in exegeses have resulted in a variety of models. If Christ's model of leadership is the fundamental model

for Christian leadership paradigms, it is important to understand what leaders perceive as Christlike leadership.

The model proposed in this study is a step toward developing a Christlike leadership framework. Serving is a core component of leading like Christ (Crowther, 2018; *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*, 2001/2007, Matthew 20:25-28; Reel, 2015; Wilkes, 1998), so delineating the elements of service associated with leading like Christ contributes to developing a comprehensive framework. Since this model was developed from a qualitative single-case study of a Christian school, it is imperative to test and refine it in other Christian schools. Since there is a close theological association between Christian schools and Christian churches, church leaders could also be involved in testing and refining this model.

Furthermore, finding Christian distinctions between service as a component of leadership in Christian schools and SLT attributes indicates that SLT is insufficient to fully understand leadership paradigms in these contexts. Rather than using existing theoretical lenses to study leadership paradigms in Christian contexts, which could place limitations on the degree to which those paradigms are understood, further studies may benefit from using a grounded theory approach.

Finally, future inquiry into Christian school leadership could focus on further understanding the dual domains of leadership expressed in this study. The spiritual domain informs leadership paradigms in Christian schools (Banke et al., 2012; Prior, 2018; Striepe & O'Donoghue, 2014), but the complementary relationship between the technical and spiritual domains of leadership is my interpretation. Though three participants agreed with my interpretation of this relationship during member checking of

the model, their perspectives were not necessarily representative of all stakeholders at First Christian nor leaders in other Christian schools. More research is needed to understand both the degree to which other Christian school leaders perceive a dual-domain paradigm of leadership and, if they do, the nature of the relationship between the two domains.

Conclusion

Serving is a fundamental component of leading in a Christian school because Christ both modeled and preached service to his followers. Although SLT can be a useful lens through which to understand the service component of leadership in a Christian school, it does not account for nor measure Christian components that fundamentally inform leadership paradigms in Christian contexts. Understanding leadership in Christian schools requires a broader theoretical approach that considers both spiritual and technical domains of leadership and considers how those domains interrelate. Adopting this approach now, during a period in which empirical inquiry into leadership in Christian schools is growing in prominence, could engender a holistic understanding of leadership in these contexts and could lead to the development of a comprehensive model of Christian leadership in schools, which will shape future leadership development and practice in those contexts.

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APPENDIX A

INITIAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The following questions were developed to guide the semi-structured interview process. These were organized according to van Dierendonck and Patterson's (2015) SLT conceptual framework as a means of facilitating comparison between the perceptions of servant leadership attributes in the Christian school context and attributes associated with SLT. These questions were designed to be intentionally broad to promote open-ended discussion.

1. What motivates a Christian to lead others in a Christian school?
2. What traits must a leader in a Christian school have in order to effectively lead others?
3. In what ways does an effective servant leader serve others?

a. In what ways have you experienced service from leaders at this school?

4. How do you feel that your service to others has affected them?
5. How has the service of your leaders affected you?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL ALPHA TEST SURVEY

Servant Leadership in Christian Schools: A Case Study
Interview Protocol Alpha Test Survey

TEACHER / SUPPORT STAFF

The goal of the present study is to examine the attributes of servant leadership as perceived, practiced, and taught by leaders in a Christian school. A qualitative case study design will be used for this inquiry; this approach is intended to provide a holistic understanding of a complex phenomenon as experienced both by the researcher and by the participants (Patton, 2015; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). Previous inquiries into this phenomenon were limited by a focus on the perceptions of the seniormost administrators. In a school community, many persons can both function as leaders and experience the leadership of others, including (a) senior administrators, (b) junior administrators, (c) teachers, (d) support staff, (e) students, and (f) parents. Therefore, the present study will include leaders from each of these groups as a means of attaining the most holistic understanding of servant leadership in that particular context.

The following survey was designed to gather your perceptions of the interview questions/prompts that I intend to use in my research study. Your responses to these items will be used to inform any modifications to the language used to construct the interview questions/prompts. Any personally identifiable information used in this survey will only be seen by the principal investigators. Your responses on this survey are voluntary; you may omit any or all of the questions on this survey. If you have any questions about this survey or how your responses will be used, please contact Christopher Morgan at christopherfmorgan@gmail.com.

Please read the following interview items and rate the degree to which (a) you understand the question/prompt, (b) you believe the question/prompt is clear, and (c) you believe you could answer the question/prompt. Then, please provide any feedback that you believe might help improve each question/prompt.

1: Who are the leaders at your school?				
	1 (Strongly Disagree)	2 (Disagree)	3 (Agree)	4 (Strongly Agree)
I understand the question.				
I believe the question is clear.				
I believe I could easily answer the question.				
How could I improve this question?				

Continued on next page.

2 (Follow Up to #1): Tell me about the thinking that led you to identify these people as leaders.				
	1 (Strongly Disagree)	2 (Disagree)	3 (Agree)	4 (Strongly Agree)
I understand the prompt.				
I believe the prompt is clear.				
I believe I could easily answer the prompt.				
How could I improve this prompt?				

3: What constitutes the character of an effective leader?				
	1 (Strongly Disagree)	2 (Disagree)	3 (Agree)	4 (Strongly Agree)
I understand the question.				
I believe the question is clear.				
I believe I could easily answer the question.				
How could I improve this question?				

Continued on next page.

4: What constitutes the character of a <u>poor</u> leader?				
	1 (Strongly Disagree)	2 (Disagree)	3 (Agree)	4 (Strongly Agree)
I understand the question.				
I believe the question is clear.				
I believe I could easily answer the question.				
How could I improve this question?				

5: What is an example of a behavior that an effective leader should exhibit?				
	1 (Strongly Disagree)	2 (Disagree)	3 (Agree)	4 (Strongly Agree)
I understand the question.				
I believe the question is clear.				
I believe I could easily answer the question.				
How could I improve this question?				

6: What is an example of a behavior that a <u>poor</u> leader exhibits?				
	1 (Strongly Disagree)	2 (Disagree)	3 (Agree)	4 (Strongly Agree)
I understand the question.				
I believe the question is clear.				
I believe I could easily answer the question.				
How could I improve this question?				

Continued on next page.

7: Are there people at your school that are good at helping or serving other people?				
	1 (Strongly Disagree)	2 (Disagree)	3 (Agree)	4 (Strongly Agree)
I understand the question.				
I believe the question is clear.				
I believe I could easily answer the question.				
How could I improve this question?				

8 (Follow up question to #7): Are the people who are good at helping or serving others leaders?				
	1 (Strongly Disagree)	2 (Disagree)	3 (Agree)	4 (Strongly Agree)
I understand the question.				
I believe the question is clear.				
I believe I could easily answer the question.				
How could I improve this question?				

9: What is an example of something that someone at the school has done to help or to be of service to you?				
	1 (Strongly Disagree)	2 (Disagree)	3 (Agree)	4 (Strongly Agree)
I understand the question.				
I believe the question is clear.				
I believe I could easily answer the question.				
How could I improve this question?				

10: What is an example of something you have done to help or to be of service to someone else at the school?				
	1 (Strongly Disagree)	2 (Disagree)	3 (Agree)	4 (Strongly Agree)
I understand the question.				
I believe the question is clear.				
I believe I could easily answer the question.				
How could I improve this question?				

11: Are you learning to help and serve others by working here?				
	1 (Strongly Disagree)	2 (Disagree)	3 (Agree)	4 (Strongly Agree)
I understand the question.				
I believe the question is clear.				
I believe I could easily answer the question.				
How could I improve this question?				

12 (Follow Up Question to #11): How are you learning to help and serve others?				
	1 (Strongly Disagree)	2 (Disagree)	3 (Agree)	4 (Strongly Agree)
I understand the question.				
I believe the question is clear.				
I believe I could easily answer the question.				
How could I improve this question?				

Continued on next page.

13: Are you learning to be a leader by working here?				
	1 (Strongly Disagree)	2 (Disagree)	3 (Agree)	4 (Strongly Agree)
I understand the question.				
I believe the question is clear.				
I believe I could easily answer the question.				
How could I improve this question?				

14 (Follow Up Question to #13): How are you learning to be a leader?				
	1 (Strongly Disagree)	2 (Disagree)	3 (Agree)	4 (Strongly Agree)
I understand the question.				
I believe the question is clear.				
I believe I could easily answer the question.				
How could I improve this question?				

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol

- (For Administrators) Why did you desire to obtain a leadership position in education?
- Who are leaders at your school?
    - You just named (fill in the number they identified) leaders: What led you to identify these people as leaders?
    - Are there others at your school that you would consider to be leaders?
- What is an example of something that you would expect a good leader to do?
    - Do you have another example you want to share?
- What is an example of something you would expect a good leader to <u>not</u> do?
    - Do you have another example you want to share?
- Is it necessary for a leader to serve others?
    - What does it look like for a leader to serve?
- Are there people in your (child's) school that are good at serving others?
    - Tell me about a time that you saw someone serving.
    - Do you consider this person to be a leader?
    - Are there other examples that you would like to share?
- What is an example of something that someone at the school has done to be of service to you?
- What is an example of something you have done to be of service to someone else at the school?
- What has your experience at this school taught you about serving others?
- What has your experience at this school taught you about leadership?

APPENDIX D

BRIEF DOCUMENT FOR MEMBER CHECKING

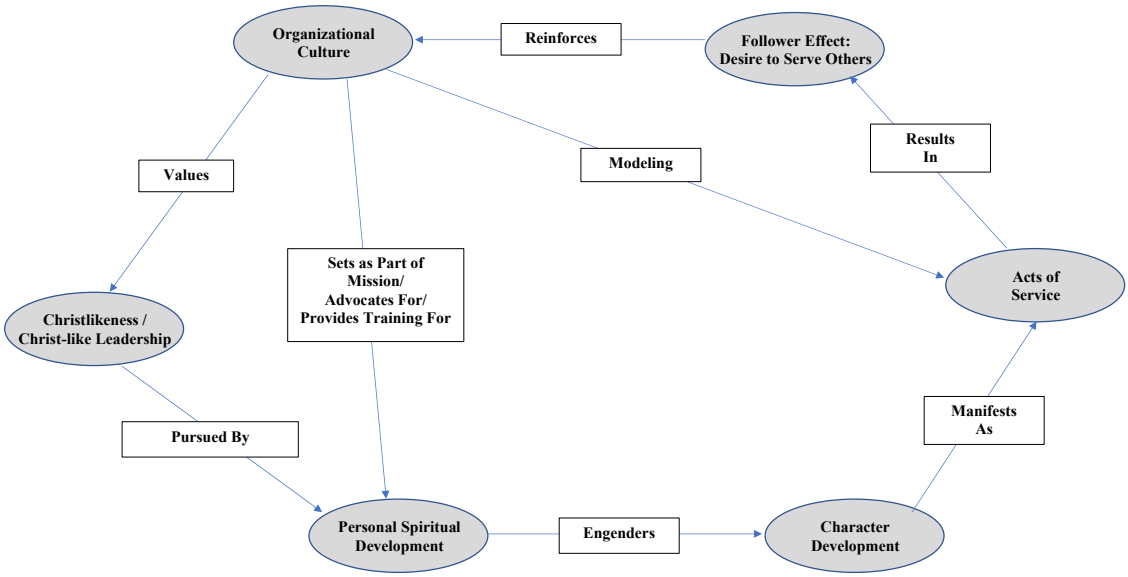
Model of Service as a Component of Leadership @ School System Brief

Key Findings:

- "Serving" is a fundamental component of leadership rather than a monolithic model of leadership.
- The overarching framework for leadership at [The School System] consists of a spiritual (religious) domain, characterized as "Christ-like leadership," and a technical domain of leadership, consisting of "soft skills" like *being visionary*, *teambuilding*, *being willing to have hard conversations*, *taking initiative*, *listening*, and *providing autonomy for employees*. These two domains complement each other: Christ-like leadership is the fundamental model, and the "soft skills" of leadership practice are utilized as part of implementing Christ-like leadership in an organization.
- Serving is a component of the spiritual domain: Christ's model of leadership is characterized by servanthood. The term "servant leadership" was used to refer to "Christ-like leadership."
- Acts of service primarily consist of identifying and meeting the professional and personal needs of other individuals.
- There is a culture of service at [The School System] that is consistently modeled by those in formal leadership positions and "trickles down" through the organization.

Figure 1

Model of Service as a Component of Leadership



Brief Explanation of Model:

[The School System]'s organizational culture is characterized in part by a core value of pursuing Christ-likeness for all stakeholders, which includes the principle that leaders should seek to reflect Christ's model of leadership, which is characterized by servanthood. This value guides the hiring process, disciplinary procedures, and the mission of the school: "helping equip students to embrace biblical truth, strive for academic excellence, and model Christ-like leadership to influence their homes, churches and communities for Christ." Christlikeness is pursued by personal spiritual development, another core value at [The School System]; [The School System] advocates for this to all stakeholders and incorporates training in spiritual development for faculty members, staff

members, parents, and students. Stakeholders engage in personal spiritual development through studying the Bible, prayer, and involvement in a local body of believers.

The result of this personal spiritual development is the cultivation of the following Christ-like character traits: *humility, selflessness, loving others*, and *caring for others*. The mechanism of cultivation in this case is the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the participants. These character traits manifest in acts of service, which primarily consist of stakeholders identifying and meeting the personal and professional needs of other individuals at [The School System] (*Note: In the study, participants seemed to *infer* the character traits from observing acts of service). Recipients and observers of these acts of service are inspired to serve others, which reinforces the cultural characteristic of pursuing Christlikeness.

APPENDIX E

HUMAN USE APPROVAL LETTER

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Bryan McCoy and Mr. Christopher Morgan

FROM: Dr. Richard Kordal, Director of Intellectual Property & Commercialization (OIPC)
rkordal@latech.edu

SUBJECT: HUMAN USE COMMITTEE REVIEW

DATE: April 15, 2020

In order to facilitate your project, an EXPEDITED REVIEW has been done for your proposed study entitled:

HUC 20-101

"Servant Leadership in Christian Schools: A Case Study"

The proposed study's revised procedures were found to provide reasonable and adequate safeguards against possible risks involving human subjects. The information to be collected may be personal in nature or implication. Therefore, diligent care needs to be taken to protect the privacy of the participants and to assure that the data are kept confidential. Informed consent is a critical part of the research process. The subjects must be informed that their participation is voluntary. It is important that consent materials be presented in a language understandable to every participant. If you have participants in your study whose first language is not English, be sure that informed consent materials are adequately explained or translated. Since your reviewed project appears to do no damage to the participants, the Human Use Committee grants approval of the involvement of human subjects as outlined.

Projects should be renewed annually. ***This approval was finalized on April 15, 2020 and this project will need to receive a continuation review by the IRB if the project continues beyond April 15, 2021.*** **ANY CHANGES** to your protocol procedures, including minor changes, should be reported immediately to the IRB for approval before implementation. Projects involving NIH funds require annual education training to be documented. For more information regarding this, contact the Office of Sponsored Projects.

You are requested to maintain written records of your procedures, data collected, and subjects involved. These records will need to be available upon request during the conduct of the study and retained by the university for three years after the conclusion of the study. If changes occur in recruiting of subjects, informed consent process or in your research protocol, or if unanticipated problems should arise it is the Researchers responsibility to notify the Office of Sponsored Projects or IRB in writing. The project should be discontinued until modifications can be reviewed and approved.