A Qualitative Case Study Examining Teacher Perceptions of Servant Leadership in Private K-12 Schools

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my wife Janelle. Your continued support of my dreams and goals is unparalleled to any person in my life. Thank you for the multitude of sacrifices you have made to allow me the opportunity to achieve this degree. You have been my proof-reader, cheerleader, confidant, counselor, and most importantly my best friend. I could not have completed this program without you. You truly are Something Beautiful.

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ABSTRACT

Teachers' values and beliefs are a key motivation to how teachers will perform in the classroom, interact with students and their colleagues, and influence the culture of a school (Borg, 2015; Davis, 2018; Finley, 2016). However, teachers do not always instruct students based on their personal values and beliefs (Fives & Gill, 2015; Diehl & Golann 2023). In this qualitative case study, the theoretical framework of servant leadership was used to understand teachers' values and beliefs and how those beliefs influenced the culture of a school. Thirteen teachers from three private religious schools in the southeastern part of the United states were asked to describe their values and beliefs regarding servant leadership. Findings indicate that the teachers in this study valued servant leadership but were not always able to act on their values and beliefs. The study also found that teachers felt over-worked, a lack of support from school leaders, and failed to see similar values modeled by leaders but believed leadership demonstrated the traits of servant leadership in the culture of the schools was positively influenced. While this study confirms the benefits of servant leadership in schools for students and school culture, implications of the study require consideration for additional teacher support in servant leadership participation, deliberation on the possibility of burnout for servant leadership requirements, and reinforce the importance of community in guiding and supporting servant leadership.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Teachers' values and beliefs have a powerful impact on the way teachers teach and the way students' experiences are shaped in the classroom (Dwyer, 2015). Teachers' beliefs have become an important part of research to understand teacher decisions, practices, and means of change (Borg, 2015). Three key elements are involved in shaping teachers' values and beliefs: normative values, descriptive beliefs, and emotions (Borg, 2015). These three elements create a system of practice which a teacher acts upon each day in the classroom. Descriptive beliefs focus on how things "are" which is the ontology and epistemology of teaching and learning (Schwieler & Ekecrantz, 2011). Descriptive beliefs focus on issues of pedagogy such as personal theories of learning, views on assessment, and self-efficacy beliefs. Normative values focus on how things "ought to be" such as what is just and fair, what is important, and how teachers should value students (Schwieler & Ekecrantz, 2011). Emotions influence the feelings of a teacher, which can fluctuate, but have a great impact on the decisions of a teacher (Nagamine et al., 2018). By understanding how things are, how a teacher believes things should be, and by understanding a teacher's emotions, a clear understanding of the practices of teachers can be understood.

Teachers' foundation, the actions and choices teachers make, emerges directly for their values and beliefs (Fives & Gill, 2015). Parjares (1992) explained that teachers' "beliefs are the best predictor of individual behavior" (p. 45). Furthermore, Borko and Putnam (1996) concluded that "teachers' knowledge and beliefs, about teaching, about

subject matter, [and] about learners, are major determinants of what they do in the classrooms" (p. 675). Fives and Gill (2015) added that "teachers' beliefs are generally regarded as an explanatory principle for practice" (p. 87). Literature has reported through several studies that teacher beliefs and values are influenced by the collective beliefs of the organization in which they work (Fives & Gill, 2015; Hannula, 2012; Jeyarai &Gandolfi, 2019). Hannula (2012) explained that the values and beliefs of an institution play an important role in shaping teacher values. These values and beliefs of an educational institution are defined by Deal and Peterson (1991) as *culture.* Fives and Gill (2015) found that "teachers' beliefs are significantly shaped by school culture and context" (p. 9). Therefore, teachers' values and beliefs are closely linked to the culture of a school (Jeyaraj & Gandolfi, 2022). Deal and Peterson (2009) explained that school "culture influences and shapes the ways that teachers, student, and administrators think, feel, and act" (p. 9). Furthermore, Deal and Peterson (2009) called for an investigation of school culture and the role culture plays in the development of teachers values and beliefs.

School Culture

Culture is a common word used among school leaders and educators and has been difficult to define by scholars (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). A universal definition of school culture does not exist making this term even more difficult to understand (Karadag et al., 2014). This word *culture* has been used to describe many different aspects of a school, such as "ethos," "sage," and "climate" (Deal & Peterson, 1991, p. 7). Deal and Peterson (1991) were two of the original researchers of culture in education and their

notion of culture has been foundational to the field. They (1991) explained that "each school has its own character or 'feel' [that] you can sense as you approach the building" (p. 7). Deal and Peterson (1991) defined the concept of school culture as "the character of a school as it reflects deep patterns of *values, beliefs, and traditions* that have been formed over the course of its history" (p. 7).

Another seminal researcher in educational culture and noted anthropologist, Clifford Geertz (1973), explained that culture represents a "historically transmitted pattern of meaning" which is seen explicitly and implicitly (p. 28). Explicit culture is seen though symbols of an organization, and implicit culture is perceived by the taken-for-granted beliefs of that organization (Geertz, 1973). Implicit culture is assumed by all the members of the organization who have all bought into the same values, beliefs, and traditions. Explicit culture is the visible results of the underlying taken-for-granted beliefs. Everyone within an organization has a part to play in both the implicit and explicit culture. Similarly, Bolman and Deal (2021) explain that culture is comprised of two parts: process and product. Culture is a process because new members are entering the organization making the culture of that organization their own, but culture is also a product because it has been previously produced and established by members within the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2021). This leads to the conclusion that culture, though established, is continually changing through and by members within an organization. Key members of the organization such as teachers could help guide and direct the constantly moving culture to maintain the underlying values, beliefs, and traditions.

Statement of the Problem

Literature has found that teachers' beliefs and values could influence students and the culture of a school (Dwyer, 2015). Dwyer (2015) found a connection between teachers' values and beliefs and the positive or negative impact these beliefs had on the culture of a school. Dwyer (2015) concluded that a "teachers' values and beliefs have a powerful effect on… shaping student' experiences" (p. 93). Fives and Gill (2015) explained that "teachers' beliefs can facilitate or hinder practice by serving to filter, frame, and guide experience, decisions, and actions" (p. 1). Five and Gill (2015) continued to explain that "teachers frequently rely on beliefs, particularly those that underlie their intuition, automaticity, and habit, to meet the demands of the practice" (p. 1). The importance of teacher beliefs and values is evident based on decades of research, but how teachers choose to act on their values and beliefs to influence school culture is not clear (Fives & Gill, 2015).

Researchers have found that teachers do not always act on their values and beliefs but instead conform to the pressures of an institution (Diehl & Golann, 2023). Atiles et al., (2017) explained that "teachers' values and beliefs which are impacted by their cultures and are often transmitted and accepted from generation to generation without evaluation" (p. 6). Furthermore, Liljedahl et al., (2023) discovered that there was a disparity between teacher beliefs and actions based on "tensions" such as pressures to prepare students for exams, complete the syllabus, and time constraints, all factors which are reflected in the school's culture. Atiles et al., (2017) added that "what a teacher believes and holds to be true and the actions the teacher actually takes can be very

different" (p.7). The values and belief of a teacher that were once held strongly can quickly change after experiencing a new event (Atiles et al., 2017). According to Atiles et al., (2017) this means "that teachers actions in a classroom might not always align with their values and beliefs" (p. 7).

One way that teachers' values and beliefs may position their outlook on education is through the idea of acting as a servant to others. According to Greenleaf's Theory of Servant Leadership, people who take on the role of leadership, such as in a classroom or school, no longer view themselves as having ultimate power to lead but choose, instead, to share their power by putting the needs of other before their own. (Greenleaf, 1998). Teachers who value served leadership demonstrate characteristics such as humility, ethical behavior, and a sense of community value (Liden et al., 2008). Through teachers placing value on servant leadership and putting those values into practice, a positive impact on the culture of a school could be found (Shepherd, 2018).

Fives and Gill (2015) have called for more research examining teacher beliefs and values. Liljedahl et al., (2023) explained that more research is needed to understand why and how teachers act on their values and beliefs. They (2023) also stated that more research is needed to explain why outside tensions cause teachers to act or fail to act on their value and belief systems. This research will answer that call by studying private school teachers' beliefs and values of servant leadership and will seek to understand how and why teachers act on those beliefs and values.

Additionally, more research is needed to understand how culture is influenced when teachers act on their values and beliefs, specifically the values of servant

leadership. The literature has been clear that school culture influences the level of achievement of the students through teachers' pedagogy (Davis, 2018; Deal & Peterson, 1991; Finley, 2016; Piotrowsky, 2016). Moreover, school leaders and teachers, through their value system, act in ways that form a school's culture (Black, 2010; Deal & Peterson, 2016; Martin, 2009; Spicer, 2016). Greenleaf (2016) explained that the desired outcome is that a servant attitude will improve employees' attitude and work ethic which could affect the culture of an organization. Servant leadership has gained greater attention from researchers in the past two decades (Davis, 2020; Shepherd 2018). Servant leadership can be understood in schools as a representation of leaders and teacher's value system in placing the interest of their followers above their own interests (Northouse, 2016).

Researchers have noted that more research is needed regarding how perceived servant leaders influence the culture of their institution (Davis, 2020; Cunningham, 2008; Renfro, 2019). Davis (2020) called for more research in the area of the influence servant leadership has on the culture of a school. Specifically, he (2022) stated that more research needed to be conducted "outside of the Midwestern United states for diverse perspectives on how servant leadership influences school culture" (p, 95). Additionally, Shepherd (2018) stated that "it would be beneficial to conduct a qualitative study (on the topic of servant leadership) which would be able to deeply analyze the intricacies of servant leadership and how it impacts a school's culture" (p. 81). Through this research, I will address previous researchers' appeal for further in the area of how servant leadership influences the culture of a school.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study will be to examine private school teachers' beliefs of the value and influence of servant leadership on the culture, students, and leaders within their school. Thirteen teachers will be interview from three different private schools in the southeastern part of the United States to understand their perceptions of servant leadership and how they believe servant leadership influences the culture of their school.

Research Questions

To examine teachers' beliefs and values of servant leadership and teachers' beliefs of how servant leadership influences the culture of a school, the following questions are asked:

1) How do private school teachers describe their beliefs on the value of servant leadership?

2) How do private school teachers describe the influence servant leadership has on the culture of their school?

Significance of the Study

Researching how teachers perceive servant leadership in their schools could provide a learning tool that will help current and future leaders understand how they may positively influence their educational institutions. Furthermore, understanding the connection between a positive school culture and teachers' expressed values could add to

the literature on school improvement as future researchers continue to seek ways to make schools better.

Findings from this study may also be important literature on teacher practices. By acting as servant leaders to their students, teachers could build positive, authentic relationships that are built around trust. The literature on teacher-student relationships may be broadened as this study encompasses teacher modeling the idea of servanthood to students. This could motivate students to be servant leaders as well which adds to the literature on educating students to be productive members of society. As students become servant leaders, they may begin serving each other and placing other's needs before their own.

Definition of Terms

The following terms will be used throughout the course of the study. For the purposes of clarity, the definition for each term was determined by common understanding within the field, as well as the researcher's perspective.

Culture

For purposes of this study, the definition of culture by Deal and Peterson (1991) will be used. Deal and Peterson (1991) define culture as ""the character of a school as it reflects deep patterns of values, beliefs, and traditions that have been formed over the course of its history" (p. 7).

Principal

The term principal will be used predominately throughout this study, but also might mean administrator or school leader.

Teacher

The term teacher as defined in this study will refer to the primary instructor in the classroom.

School

A school in this study is referred to by any educational institution that servers PK-12 students.

Servant Leadership

Greenleaf's (2016) definition of servant leadership will be used in this research study. He defines servant leadership as "The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then the conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead" (p. 52).

Servant Teacher

The servant teacher puts the wellbeing of the students above all other tasks in the class room. This wellbeing in associated with the emotional and social health of the students (Noland & Richards, 2015).

Mission and Vision

The mission of a school refers to the school's statement of purpose and commitments to its stakeholders. Vision will refer to the school's statement of its goals for the future and describes how it will address its mission (Deal and Peterson, 2009).

Delimitations

This study was delimited to three private schools in the southeastern part of the United states. Thirteen high school teachers were interviewed from the three private schools in the southeast. This study was delimited to schools whose teachers had a basic understanding of servant leadership. The results of this study may not be generalized to public schools or schools outside the United States.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 has provided the research questions guiding this study that point the significance of the study by understanding how teachers perceive servant leadership within their school. Teachers' values and beliefs of servant leadership are researched to understand how teachers believe servant leadership affects the culture and the leadership within their schools. The purpose, study significance, delimitations of this study were outlined as well as key terms defined in reference to their significance and use in this study. Chapter 2 will discuss, in more detail, teachers' perceptions of servant leadership. Chapter 2 will provide an in-depth review of pertinent literature as it relates to teachers' values and beliefs, school culture, and principal leadership. Chapter 3 will explain the methodology and procedures used in this qualitative study. Chapter 4 will contain a presentation of the findings. In Chapter 5, the study will conclude with a discussion of the findings and implications of the findings for future research.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the purpose, research questions, and the significance of this study. The purpose of this study is to explore teacher's perceptions of servant leadership in the K-12 setting. To achieve this purpose, recent literature regarding the theory of servant leadership in the K-12 educational context must be reviewed. The following research questions guided this study:

1) How do private school teachers describe their beliefs on the value of servant leadership?

2) How do private school teachers describe the influence of servant leadership on the culture of their school?

The review begins with a review of the search process, followed by an explanation of the theoretical framework that was used to guide this study. A comprehensive overview of teacher's values and beliefs and school culture is described and examined in this literature review.

Search Process

Using multiple resource databases, articles and research studies were compiled from the past ten years relevant to the study research questions. Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) and Google Scholar were the two search engines used to solicit relevant articles. I conducted an initial search of key words such as *servant leadership in education* which yielded over 500 articles. I narrowed my search by combining key words for example, *servant leadership and the high school principal,*

servant leadership and the influence on school culture, *servant leadership and teacher performance*, and *servant leadership and student outcomes*. I conducted the same searches in Google Scholar, and I was left with under 50 articles to help guide this literature review. I set up a literature matrix to organize the articles by the type of study, the research method, and the topic studied in the article. After perusing the literature, I organized the articles into two categories: teachers' values and beliefs and school culture.

Teacher Values

Teachers' personal beliefs and what they value drive their goals and behaviors in the classroom (Barni et al., 2019). Bloom and Ellis (2009) described a value as "a deeply held view of what we believe to be important and worthwhile" (p. 1). Schwartz and Bilsky (1987) formed their own definition of the term *value* through five common themes: "(a) concepts or beliefs, (b) about desirable end states or behaviors, (c) that transcend specific situations, (d) guide selection or evaluation of behavior and events, and (e) are ordered by relative importance" (p. 551). A person's values get to the core of who a person is and motivates his or her actions. Chin and Lin (2001) explained that values are "personal preferences concerning individual's standards for considering the importance or worthwhile of something for themselves to think and act" (p. 250). These personal values impact how a teacher treats others, spends their time in the classroom, and pursues ideals and values (Bloom & Ellis 2009).

Chan and Wong (2019) divided values into two different categories: espoused values and enacted values. Espoused values are those that people believe they hold and tell others they hold, but enacted values are those that are actively put into practice

(Chang & Wong 2019). For example, Wilkerson (2019) observed the enacted values teachers had regarding servant leadership and how those values influenced the reading achievement of at-risk minority students.

Social and institutional values must also be considered in regards to teacher values. Social values are those that are consistent and resembling a community (Hannula, 2012). These values are shared and represent the culture and beliefs of an institution. Shepherd (2018) specifically observed the effect of social values in her study by researching teachers' perception of how a school's culture is impacted by servant leadership. Institutional values are those that are found in documents such as written mission statements, vision statements, and policies (Hannula 2012). Institutional values are found in written artifacts that distinctly express the values of the school. For example, Jeyaraj and Gandolfi (2022) investigated the influence critical pedagogy has on a servant leader. Specifically, these researchers investigated the written documents of an organization regarding critical pedagogy and correlated the impact it has on the servant leaders within organizations (Jeyaraj & Gandolfi, 2022). In this study, I will be investigating the perceptions teachers have on the social values their school regarding servant leadership.

Teacher Leadership

School administrators should not and cannot be the only individuals responsible for leadership within a school as the teachers consist of the largest group of employees within the school. Teachers are seen as the natural leaders within their classrooms as the basic assumption of teacher as the supplier and the student as the consumer (Matsiori et,

at. 2018). York-Barr and Duke (2004) described teacher leadership as "the process of influencing colleagues, school administrators, or the other school stakeholders for improving teaching and learning methods with the aim of raising the student learning level and student achievement" (p.10). A teacher should no longer just be evaluated by their teaching skills, but should be evaluated on how they lead, problem solve, and communicate. The values a teacher holds directly impacts how a teacher carries himself or herself and leads in the classroom.

Historically, researchers have agreed that the teacher as a leader is a primary factor in determining student outcomes, student motivation, and the overall culture of a school, but more recently the focus of researchers have been on the effects of a teacher's leadership style (Noland & Richards, 2015). Anderson (2017) found that the style in which a teacher leads can be espoused from a teacher's values and beliefs. Anderson (2017) explained that the "quality of leadership styles are proven to facilitate change… and improve the overall organizational performance" (p. 1). The proposed style of leadership that Anderson (2017) believed is the most appropriate for schools today is a transformational style of leadership. Anderson (2017) explained that transformational leadership positively impacts schools by "building and strengthening new organizational norms, establishing new meaning and ways of thinking, and its effectiveness as a tool in helping leaders break established norms and establish new norms that transform school culture" (p.5). Raza and Sikandar (2018) concluded that the situation style of leadership is the preferred form of leadership in an educational setting as the leader learns to use each leadership style as a tool that can help achieve targets, builds relationships, and

addresses the task at hand. The proposed leadership style in this research study as the preferred form of leadership within an educational setting is servant leadership.

Servant Teaching

Another form of leadership in the classroom that is pertinent to this study is servant teaching. Central to the concept of servant teaching is the teacher as a servant first. Noland and Richards (2015) explained that servant teaching occurs when a teacher emphasizes "student development above all other goals and elevating student welfare above self" (p. 17). The student-teacher relationship is a key element in the learning process for students (Sahawneh & Benuto, 2018). This relationship is started and cultivated by teachers and is in many cases a mirror of the leader-follower relationships modeled in the organization (Noland & Richards 2015; Sahawneh & Benuto 2018). The servant teacher understands and models the tenets of servant leadership listed by Spears (2005) that includes: emotional healing, creating value for community, demonstrating conceptual skills, and behaving ethically. The teacher transforms the student-teacher relationship by using these key elements of servant leadership to help students grow and succeed (Sahawneh & Benuto, 2018).

The servant teacher is one who seeks to help students achieve the highest potential in the class room and as a person (Wilkerson, 2018). The idea of servant teaching goes far beyond the pedagogy of a teacher but is the ethos a teacher creates in his or her classroom (Noland & Richards, 2015). Jeyaraj and Gandolfi (2018) described the servant teacher as expressing concern for a student's wellbeing, especially during times of struggle. This emotional healing and care can only take place if the servant

teacher has set a tone for the classroom that is focused on self-care and the fostering of relationships. Servant teachers understand the big picture and know that they play a key role in the lives of students to help them develop emotionally, socially, and mentally (Jeyaraj & Gandolfi 2019). Shepherd (2018) concluded that "by satisfying the needs of the whole student and not only targeting academics, servant leadership builds the capacity to succeed through emotional fulfilment" (p. 35).

School Culture

School culture is a topic that is commonly researched and studied to investigate its impact on educational institutions. Deal and Peterson (1991) provided seminal work on school culture and explained that "each school has its own character or 'feel' [that] you can sense as you approach the building" (p. 7). They (1991) defined the concept of school culture as "the character of a school as it reflects deep patterns of values, beliefs, and traditions that have been formed over the course of its history" (p. 7). Schein (1996) explained that there are three layers to culture: artifacts, espoused values, and assumptions. Artifacts are the examples of teachers and students excelling in practices that encourage learning (Schein, 1996). Myriad research studies have been conducted to find a correlation between positive school culture and the success of students and teachers (Deal & Peterson, 1991). Therefore, if teachers value servant leadership and it is modeled by principals, then growth in student success and teacher satisfaction could be expected.

Goodenough (1981) developed a framework for culture theory that located culture as a construct within an individual's mind that connects with behavior. Culture theory

emphasizes a teacher's role within culture, the organization of school culture, and the location of the culture in the mind instead of the material (Martin-Chambers, 2022). School culture would then be internalized by an individual and would evolve over a lifetime by personal perceptions and interpretations of surrounding experiences (Henstrand, 2006). Geertz (1973) understood culture as "webs of individualized meaning… [and is] ethnographic through the building of knowledge and sorting of structures of significance' (p. 9). Geertz continues to explain that culture becomes a public phenomenon that is based on common symbols and becomes a shared reality of a group.

Individual morals are an important aspect within the theory of culture. These morals are based primarily on the upbringing of an individual and their life experiences (Henstrand 2006). When relating to the culture of a school, the individual morals and upbringing of teachers and administrators could greatly influence the culture of a school. Nehez and Blossing (2022) explained that "school culture can be defined as assumptions and values that school members base their actions upon and can be studied through the practices in which school members act and profess their assumptions and values" (p. 312). Teachers and principals could then have significant power to increase or decrease their influence on the culture of a school. Jones (2018) discovered five basic themes of teachers' actions that positively affected the culture of a school: creating a welcoming environment, embracing a restorative approach to behavior and discipline, acknowledging that words and language build agency and identity, ensuring equity and inclusivity in learning for all students, and focusing on continuing improvement for

themselves and their school. These themes discovered by Jones (2018) are rooted in morals and values that a teacher would hold to and develop through their life experiences. Kara (2022) explained that when communication and interaction between individuals is limited, common values and goals could not be reached and serious differences on thought and ideas ensue as the culture weakens. When core values are not established and do not align within a community, the culture begins to break down and is no longer a conducive environment for progress and growth.

Many terms have been given to describe negative school culture: stuck, cruise control, sinking, struggling, and toxic (Deal & Peterson, 2009; Rozenholtz 2000; Stoll & Fink, 1996). Deal and Peterson (2016) described toxic school cultures as ones where stakeholders have a lack of belief in a student's ability to succeed, have low expectations for the school and staff, have a lack of affective leadership, and lack of support and resources for teachers. Conversely, positive school culture has been described in terms of healthy, positive, dynamic, and thriving (Deal & Peterson, 2016). Muhammad (2018) showed that positive school culture results in the sense of belonging and appreciation, holds individuals to high standards, and elevates expectations for students. Teasley (2016) also reveals that positive school culture provides opportunities for collaboration and evokes a sense of community. A myriad of factors has been studied to see their effect and contribution to the culture of a school whether positively or negatively.

Theoretical Frame

Greenleaf's theory of servant leadership will be used to frame this research study. The theory of servant leadership has gained more attention from researchers in the past

two decades as it is becoming a more widespread form of leadership (Spears, 2005). Servant leaders are focused on the good of their followers before their own interests (Northouse, 2018). Greenleaf (2008) stated that "The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then the conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead" (p. 52). Greenleaf was intrigued with how power and authority related to the individuals within an organization (Northouse, 2018). Greenleaf explained that a basis for many of his theories are developed out of Judeo-Christian principles, but his theoretical frame can be applied to any person or organizations regardless of religious beliefs (Frick, 2011). Greenleaf added that serving others would promote a social responsibility to help the "have-nots," and would motivate a leader to shift the authority onto those who were being led (Northouse, 2018). Larry Spears, the former executive of the *Robert K. Greenleaf Center* in Indianapolis has developed the model of servant leadership to display the following attributes: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growing of people, and building community (Northouse, 2018). Servant leadership as practiced by teachers and educational leaders could have a positive impact on students and the culture within their schools.

When Greenleaf's theory of servant leadership is applied to education, a positive influence could be discovered. Shepherd (2018) explained that three things need to occur for servant leadership to shape the culture of a school. First, servant leadership is reflected in a culture where there is a "norm for caring" (Shepherd, 2018). Second, servant leadership must be apparent in the organization's leader (Shepherd 2018). Third,

the followers in an organization must accept servant leadership and acknowledge emotional nature of servant leadership (Shepherd 2018). Davis (2020) concluded that school leaders appreciated of how servant leadership was mirrored in the culture of their schools. Moreover, Davis (2020) found that principals reported that their schools had an increase in productivity when servant leadership principles were applied to how they lead their faculty.

Research has examined the characteristics of servant leadership, both internationally as well as in the US. Liden et al. (2015) completed a study to validate a 7-item measure of global servant leadership (SL-7) and confirmed in their findings that the following characteristics remained consistent of perceived servant leaders:

1) Emotional healing, which involves the degree to which the leader cares about followers' personal problems and well-being;

2) Creating value for the community, which captures the leader's involvement in helping the community surrounding the organization as well as encouraging followers to be active in the community;

3) Conceptual skills, reflecting the leader's competency in solving work problems and understanding the organization's goals;

4) Empowering, assessing the degree to which the leader entrusts followers with responsibility, autonomy, and decision-making influence;

5) Helping subordinates grow and succeed, capturing the extent to which the leader helps followers reach their full potential and succeed in their careers;

6) Putting subordinates first, assessing the degree to which the leader prioritizes meeting the needs of followers before tending to his or her own needs;

7) Behaving ethically, which includes being honest, trustworthy, and serving as a model of integrity. (p. 255)

These characteristics have served as both a measure of the extent of servant leadership and as goals for current leaders to achieve. Each of these characteristics will be discussed in the following section.

Characteristics of Servant Leadership

Jit et al. (2017) in their study concluded that:

> a servant leader, with reported behavioral characteristics such as empathy, compassion, and altruistic calling and healing, builds not only a mentally and emotionally healthy workforce but also inculcates a sense of cohesiveness, collaboration, and sustainable relationships among the followers by understanding and addressing their feelings and emotions. (p. 81)

Servant leaders have a desire to see the emotional healing of their followers as they ease the burdens of their subordinates by nurturing their mental health, empowering them, and helping them grow professionally and personally (Wheeler, 2012). Spears (2005) defined emotional healing as the ability to help people make whole. He further explained that when the hopes and dreams of people come crashing down or relationships are broken, emotional healing can fix their broken spirits and emotional pain. Many studies have been conducted that suggest servant leadership can promote the well-being and emotional

health of their followers by positively effecting work culture (Black, 2010; Jit et al., 2017; Neubert et al., 2008).

Spears (2005) reported that servant leaders must establish the elements of community building in conjunction with their employees. Spears (2010) stated that "much has been lost in recent human history as a result of the shift from local communities to large institutions… [but this] awareness causes the servant leader to seek to identify some means for building community among those who work within a given institution" (p. 29). Greenleaf (2002) explained that servant leaders are key in the process of rebuilding community. Greenleaf (2002) stated that this is "not by mass movements, but by each servant-leader demonstrating his or her unlimited liability for a quite specific community-related group" that community will be restored in organizations (p. 29).

Liden et al. (2008) described conceptual skills as "possessing the knowledge of the organization and tasks at hand so as to be in a position to effectively support and assist others, especially immediate followers" (p. 162). Spears (2010) believed that there is a "delicate balance between conceptual thinking and a day-to-day operational approach" (p. 28). Spears (2010) understood the need for operational thinking, but he believed that a servant leader must look beyond the day-to-day realities. Spears (2010) continued to add that "a leader who wishes to be a servant leader must stretch his or her thinking to encompass broader-based conceptual thinking" (p. 29).

A servant leader is willing to put the work of the subordinate over his or her own (Liden et al., 2008). A servant leader clearly shows subordinates that their work comes first and is a top priority (Liden et al., 2008). Humility is the essence of servant

leadership. Dennis and Bocarnea, (2005) explained that humility "is the ability to keep one's accomplishments and talents in perspective… which means not being self-focused but rather focused on others" (p. 602). Displaying humility also means that a servant leader can show respect for his or her employees and acknowledging the contributions to the team. Greenleaf (1998) believed that the primary focus of servant leaders should be on his or her employees. He continued to explain that employees are "all too often forgotten and taken for granted… if employees receive care, training, and attention they deserve, shareholder and customer satisfaction would inevitably follow" (p. 282).

"Empowerment is entrusting power to others, and for the servant leader it involves effective listening, making people feel significant, putting an emphasis on teamwork, and valuing of love and equality" (Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005 p. 604). By using the example of Jesus Christ, Russell (2000) stated that "Jesus both taught and empowered his disciples… consequently, the second phase of Jesus' plan for the disciples was to delegate to them the work of the ministry" (p. 49). Jesus' ministry was to expand his message by empowerment and instilling that message in his followers. Dierendonck, (2011) explained that servant leaders are self-determined people and by building strong and positive relationships they can empower their followers to develop their own self-determination. Servant leaders use the power that is given to them to empower their followers instead of themselves (Dierendonck, 2011).

A servant leader is one who "demonstrates genuine concern for others' career growth and development by providing support and mentoring" (Liden et al., 2008 p. 32). A servant leader is committed to the growth and success of followers and recognizes the

responsibility to nurture the professional and personal growth of subordinates (Spears, 2010). Spears (2010) provided practical examples of how a servant leader can help subordinates grow and succeed: "concrete actions such as making funds available for personal and professional development, taking a personal interest in the ideas and suggestions from everyone, encouraging worker involvement in decision-making, and actively assisting laid-off employees to find other positions" (p. 29).

Ethics is a code or system determining what is right and wrong. A servant leader interacts in a way that is openly fair and honest with others (Liden et al., 2008). By behaving ethically, a servant leader establishes trust with subordinates. Dennis and Bocarnea, (2005) defined trust as "an essential characteristic of servant leadership, [and] servant leaders model truth in the way they coach, empower, and persuade." (p. 603). This trust is a basic and essential element to building relationship in which a servant leader can thrive. Dierendonck, (2011) explained that practicing ethics is essential to building relationships with subordinates. He (2011) stated that "at the core of the relationship between the servant-leader and follower stands the leader's belief in the intrinsic value of each individual" (p. 1246). By ethically understanding that all people have worth and value, a servant leader can develop genuine relationships and build trust with followers.

Spears (2005) has comprised a similar list entailing the key values and traits of servant leaders. Spears (2005) determined that "servant-leadership advocates a group-oriented approach to analysis and decision making as a means of strengthening institutions and improving society" (p. 5). Yukl (2012) also explained that "servant

leadership… is about helping others to accomplish shared objectives by facilitating individual development, empowerment, and collective work that is consistent with the health and long-term welfare of followers" (p. 419). Now that a basic understanding of the characteristics of servant leadership has been addressed, recent research studies specific to education should be examined.

By using servant leadership as my theoretical framework, I will have a clear definition of servant leadership and will be able to see how the practice of servant leadership impacts K-12 schools. I will use Liden's seven-part measure of servant leadership to guide my interview questions in this qualitative study. This seven-part measure of servant leadership will allow me to draw out themes from my interviews with private school teachers.

Conclusion

Leadership plays a key role in the success of a school. Servant leadership could be a style of leadership that has a positive impact on the culture of a school, teacher satisfaction, and student achievement. In this literature review, the concepts of teachers' beliefs and values, the principal's influence on teacher satisfaction and student achievement, and the influence of culture on teachers and students have been addressed. I would like to add to the body of research by conducting this qualitative study on the perceptions of servant leadership by teachers. I believe that I will add a valuable perspective by studying private school teachers from Protestant-Evangelical, Catholic, and non-religious private schools.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODS

In the previous chapter, I examined the literature of teacher's perceptions of servant leadership in a K-12 setting. How teachers describe their values and believes are important because those values guide the actions of a teacher within the classroom and build the culture of the school (Jeyaraj & Gandolfi, 2019; Noland & Richards, 2015; Wilkerson 2018). In the literature review, I also examined the importance of how teachers view the culture of their schools. The culture of a school can be influenced by all members of the institution, but primarily school leaders and teachers are the driving factor (Deal & Peterson, 2016; Jones 2018). The culture of a school affects everything from student performance to teacher satisfaction within the walls of a school (Kara, 2022; Teasley, 2016).

The purpose of this study was to investigate how teachers perceive servant leadership, and the outcomes for the culture and student within their school. The following research questions guided this study:

1) How do private school teachers describe their beliefs on the value of servant leadership?

2) How do private school teachers describe the influence servant leadership has on the culture of their school?

Research Design and Rationale

Design type

I conducted qualitative case study research to understand the perceptions school teachers had for servant leadership. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained that the overall purpose for a qualitative study is to "understand how people make sense of their lives and experiences" (p. 24). A qualitative study relies on constructivism to guide the researcher as he or she observes how individuals contrast reality with their social worlds (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) continued to explain that someone interested in a qualitative study would want to discover "how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 24). A qualitative study was the most appropriate design for my research because I wanted to uncover and interpret the meaning behind how school teachers in the southeast made sense of their constructed world.

According to Creswell (2014), "qualitative case studies are distinguished by the size of the bounded case, such as whether the case involves an individual, a group, and entire program, or an activity" (p. 99). I used a case study approach to research the perceptions of teachers in three private schools in the southeastern United States. Hyett et al. (2014) explains that case study research is a "detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, a single depository of documents or one particular event" (p.54). The methodology of a case study allowed me to focus on one setting: private schools in the southeast. The case study methodology also allowed me to examine a single subject group: teachers.

Rationale

A qualitative case study worked best to answer the research questions through interviews with teachers and take field notes to observe their experiences with servant leadership in their schools. By analyzing field notes and interviews, I desired to understand how these teachers define servant leadership and discover how the school teachers believed their values influenced the culture of their school. I wanted to hear the narratives told by the teachers to better understand their beliefs of servant leadership and connection to how they perceived the impact on the culture of their schools. I did not choose a quantitative study because I wanted to have a small number of participants to delve deep into their experiences with servant leadership.

Site and Participants

Site

I chose to interview thirteen teachers from three different religious private K-12 schools in the Southeastern part of the United States. I currently teach at a private K-12 school in the Southeast and have a gateway into the three schools where I conducted my research. I also chose to study private schools because as a private school educator, I am interested in how other private school educators perceive servant leadership. I chose two private evangelical Christian schools and a private Catholic school. I wanted to choose private schools that had different missions and religious affiliations to receive a broader understanding of teacher perceptions of servant leadership in the private schools.

St. James High School[1] is an all-boys Catholic school serving over 400 high school boys in the US southeast. St. James is also a military school as all 9th and 10th grade students are required to participate in their Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) program. The mission of St. James High School, as stated on the school's website, is a school that "educates young men from diverse backgrounds, supports a deeper commitment to faith, prepares them for life through a quality academic program, and instills leadership skills through a JROTC program, athletics, extra-curricular activities and community service. Through instruction and discipline, we seek to form men of virtue and integrity who are prepared for life-long learning and service to their faith and civic communities" (St James School Website, 2023) The school was founded by Benedictine Monks in 1902 and is still a part of the local Diocese.

Grace Christian School is a Pk-12 Evangelical Christian school serving over 1000 students in the US southeast. Grace Christian School is not connected to a church or any other religious institution, but ties its beliefs back to the Apostles Creed. The mission of Grace Christian school is to offer "an outstanding college preparatory education grounded in Christian faith and values" (Grace Christian School Website, 2023). Grace Christian School is accredited by Cognia and the Council on Educational Standards and Accountability.

Southeast Christian School is a private PK-12 college preparatory school serving over 1200 students in the US southeast. Collegiate School is stated to be a ministry of an evangelical church. The mission of the Collegiate School is to "assist parents in teaching

[1] To protect the confidentiality of site and participants in this study, pseudonyms have been used

students to glorify Jesus Christ in the pursuit of spiritual, academic, physical, and social excellence" (Southeast School Website, 2023).

Participants

With the principal's written permission from each school, I sent out a recruitment email to the high school teachers in each school. In this recruitment email to the principal, I detailed the contents of my study and asked for a list of teachers I could contact to interview. Once I received a list from the school's principal, I sent out an email to the teachers on the list. In this email I explained my study and ask that they fill out a demographic survey. In this survey, I asked the teachers their gender, subject taught, years of experience, and years employed at their current school. Teachers were given two weeks to volunteer. After I collected participant names, I chose a diverse sample of 5 teachers from the two evangelical schools and three teachers from the catholic school, based on years of experience, age, and gender (see Table 3.1 for the list of participants in this research study). I desired to interview a diverse group of teachers to insure I had an diverse group in years of experience as well as subject expertise for my research study. I wanted to hear from multiple viewpoints and an array of differing experiences so that my research would better reflect how servant leadership is perceived at each school. Further details of participants are outlined in the data collection section of this DAR.

Data Collection

Instrumentation

I created a list of open ended questions based on the literature and the research questions to conduct interviews. I used the global measure of servant leadership created by Liden et al. (2015) to guide the creation of my interview protocol (see Chapter 2 for an explanation of the attributes of servant leadership). I focused on the seven parts of servant leadership: emotional healing, communal values, conceptual skills, humility, empowering, helping subordinate grow and succeed, and behaving ethically (Liden et al., 2015). I developed this list of questions beforehand, but I did not determine the order in which I would ask the questions. I chose to ask these questions in a semi-structured format. This format allowed me to ask follow up questions and dive deeper into the experiences of each teacher. I asked open ended questions for the purpose of hearing stories of the experiences the teachers had with servant leadership in their schools. The protocol I used for the teachers during their interviews can be found in appendix in table 2.1.

I validated the open-ended survey instrument through face validity (Edmonson & Irby, 2008). Colleagues in my doctoral cohort, who are all educational professionals, helped to validate the questions. These educational professionals were also given my research questions to insure the protocol was in line with the interview protocol. Based on the feedback received, I adjusted the protocol. This process of face validity insured the trustworthiness of the questionnaire by receiving feedback from a group of educational

professionals that were similar to the sample but were not a part of my study (Edmonson & Irby, 2008).

Data Collection

Data collected from interviews began with an email to participant volunteers to face-to-face interview at their convenience. I conducted each of these interviews on the school campus in the participants' offices or classrooms. I recorded and transcribed all of the interviews. I conducted the interviews face to face, but I used Zoom record feature to transcribe these interviews. I listened through all of the interviews once and corrected any errors that were made through the Zoom transcription service.

I did not give the protocol to these participants beforehand. I used a semi-structured style of interviewing which allowed me to ask follow up questions based on the answers given to me by the participants. Merriam and Tisdell (2017) explained that "This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic" (p. 109). By conducting a semi-structured style of interview, I was able to ask questions that would allow me to understand each of the participants' stories and point of view. This interview style was also helpful as some of these participants have different duties and experiences at the school and therefore a different perspective on the impact of servant leadership.

Pajares (1992) stated that "beliefs cannot be directly observed or measured but must be inferred from what people say, intend, and do" (p. 314). Fives and Gill (2015) suggested that researcher use "open-ended interviews, observations, and related think-aloud to determine consistencies and inconsistencies between what teachers say, intend,

and what they do" (p. 39). Therefore, I must use multiple means of collecting data to more accurately understand teachers' beliefs and value of servant leadership. To do so, I conducted walk-throughs of each school as a means of verification. As I conducted walk-throughs of each school, I took field notes and wrote down my observations in a rubric. I looked for signage on the walls and behaviors of the students and faculty. These sources of data from three different perspectives allowed me to confirm the nature of teachers' perceptions through triangulation.

Data Analysis

I used an interpretive-focused strategy to analyze the data of interview transcripts and field notes. Douglas (2017) explained that interpretive-focused coding "reorganizes data in order to identify themes that, while perhaps contextualized in the research setting, are decontextualized with regard to an individual's experience" (p. 4). I used an interpretive-focused coding so I could identify the themes that aligned with the definition of servant leadership given by Greenleaf (2016) and the 7-part measure of global servant leadership created by Liden et al. (2015). By using the theoretical framework of Servant Leadership, I used an etic approach to understanding the data. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) define an etic approach as coming from an "outsider perspective" (p. 340). Using the general concepts from the definition and description of servant leadership provided by Greenleaf and Liden et al. (2015), I was able to draw specific conclusions about the experiences of the participants.

I used thematic analysis to analyze my data. Maguire and Delahunt (2017) describe thematic analysis as "the process of identifying patterns or themes within

qualitative data" (p. 352). In analyzing my data, I used Braun and Clark's six-phase framework for conducting thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Their six-phase process included "familiarization with the data, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up" (Braun & Clarke, 2006 p. 78-79). I read and re-read my manuscripts and field notes following each step of Braun and Clark's thematic analysis framework. As I was searching for themes, I highlighted the manuscripts and field notes with significant statements and repetitive themes. Braun and Clark define a theme as a "coherent and meaningful pattern in the data relevant to the research questions" (p. 77). On the fifth set of defining and naming themes, I used Liden et al.'s (2015) list of the characteristics of servant leadership to help categorize my data. Once I finalized reviewing my themes, I wove "together the analytic narrative and data extracts to tell the reader a coherent story about the data" (Braun & Clark p. 79).

Ethical Safeguards

Ethical safeguards were put in place to ensure the protection of the participants and institutions in this study. Only pseudonyms were used to refer to participants and institutions in reporting findings from this research to provide confidentiality and identity protection. The only identifiers of participants were on the informed consent form presented and signed during the initial interview meeting. Participants were asked to signed the form if they were interested in participating in the study and for permission to be recorded for an interview.

For meaningful research to take place, I must remain ethical by reporting my findings fully and honestly (Rossman & Rallis, 2016). I was aided in conducting my

research in an ethical manner throughout the research process by adhering to the guidelines provided by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The University of Tennessee requires researchers to gain approval from the IRB before conducting their research. The IRB requires researchers to comply with variety of ethical safeguards and to provide confidentiality to individuals and institutions in the collection and presentation of data. The IRB played an important role to ensure the ethical nature of this research study.

Methods of Verification

When collecting data in a qualitative research study, the issues of trustworthiness and dependability should be discussed. Merriam and Tisdell (2017) explains that research should be concerned with "providing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner" (p.209). Creswell (2014) believes that validation is a strength of qualitative research and that through description "findings can transport readers to the setting and give the discussion an element of shared experiences" (p. 202). I demonstrate the validity of this study through the triangulation of data, a multi-site case study, and member checks.

Triangulation of Data

Lincoln and Guba (1985) established that the truth value of a qualitative study should be determined by the credibility. Lincoln and Guba (1985) continue to describe credibility as factors of truth values, applicability, consistency, and neutrality. One method to ensure this credibility is through triangulation (Lincoln & Guba 1985). Denzin (1978) and Patton (2015) have identified four types of triangulation, one of which is the triangulation of sources (Patton, 2015). A key component of the triangulation of sources

is comparing people with differ viewpoints. I accomplished this triangulation of sources by interviewing a diverse group of individuals from multiple private school in Savannah, GA. A second form of triangulation is using different methods to collect data (Patton, 1999). I conducted interviews and performed walk-throughs of each school to have a diverse group of data.

Multi-Site Case Study

I used a multi-site case study in my qualitative research study to protect against bias in my analysis. Since I was the only researcher in this study, there was a heightened risk for bias, and this multi-site case study provided multiple indicators for confidence in the validity of measure (Yin, 2016). Conducting interviews and performing walk-throughs in three different private schools in the Southeastern part of the United States ensured my findings were more detailed and the study was strengthened in precision and validity (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Member checks

After performing interviews and having them transcribed, I gave each participant a copy of the transcript from the interview to review. I allowed each participant a chance to give feedback on the transcript to ensure that I did not misrepresent anything communicated in the interview. I kept all the interviews in electronic form on a password protected computer where only I had access to the files. Maxwell (2023) states that member checks are an "important way for ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do" (p. 111).

Role of the Researcher

Working in education as a teacher and as an administrator, I bring my own bias and perspective to this study. I personally believe that servant leadership is the best style of leadership to employ as a leader. I am a Caucasian male who holds to aspects of a Judeo-Christian faith. In Greenleaf's theoretical frame of servant leadership, many aspects of the Judeo-Christian faith are present as he draws examples from this belief system as the basis for his theoretical frame (Greenleaf & Spears, 2014). These aspects of my faith could have an impact on the importance that I place on servant leadership as the best form and style of leadership.

I teach at a private, college preparatory school in southeast part of the United States. I currently serve on the school's executive leadership team as the Director of Campus Life. In this role I attempt to model qualities of servant leadership as I lead in different areas of the school. I also work with many student leadership and diversity teams at my school. While working with these teams, I attempt to teach and instill servant leadership qualities within my students. The individuals I interview also work and teach at similar schools in the US southeast. I have professional relationships with these colleagues and have an understanding of the culture and dynamics of their schools.

Conclusion

Merriam and Tisdell (2017) state that a basic qualitative study is "the analysis of the data [by]… identifying recurring patterns that characterize the data" (p. 24). Merriam and Tisdell (2017) continued to explain that "findings are these recurring patterns or

themes supported by the data from which they were derived, [and] the overall interpretation will be the researcher's understanding of the participants' understanding of the phenomenon of interest" (p. 24). By analyzing the data, I am able to understand how these teachers defined their experiences with servant leadership, explore how the servant leadership of the principals impacts subordinates, and discover how the teachers believed servant leadership influenced the culture of the school. The data methods used in this research study are credible and are free from research bias.

CHAPTER FOUR
ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Teachers' values and beliefs have a major impact on pedagogy, students' educational experience, and the culture of a school (Dwyer, 2015). Teachers do not always act on their values and beliefs but sometimes conform to the pressures of the institution and fall into a cycle of habit as they perform their daily duties (Fives & Gill, 2015). It is the teachers, leaders, and students who are constantly shaping and defining the culture of a school (Bolman & Deal, 2021). The culture of a school plays an integral role in the achievement of students, the morale of teachers, and the impact a school has on the community (Davis, 2018; Deal & Peterson, 1991; Finley, 2016; Piotrowsky, 2016). By researching teachers' values and beliefs on a specific topic, such as servant leadership, a better understanding of how teachers act on their values and beliefs and how culture is formed could be discovered. The purpose of this study is to investigate teachers' beliefs on the value of servant leadership, and the outcomes it has for the culture within their school. The following research questions guided this study:

1) How do private school teachers describe their beliefs on the value of servant leadership?

2) How do private school teachers describe the influence servant leadership has on the culture of their school?

The research findings of this qualitative case study are based on the analysis of thirteen private high school teachers who teach at three different schools in the southeast. Opened ended interviews were conducted with each of these private school teachers to better understand their values and beliefs of servant leadership and how they believe

servant leadership impacted the culture of their school. These thirteen teachers provide a diverse sample of gender, subjects taught, years of experience, and years at their current school, as depicted in Table 3.1. Data collection also took place in the form of "walk-throughs" and document collection of each school to provide a clearer understanding of the culture of each school and to support the data given in the interviews. The data were then used to develop three major themes which will guide the findings of this study.

Data Coding

Using an interpretive-focused strategy, I analyzed my interview transcripts and field notes by searching for common themes. I used Braun and Clark's (2006) six-phase framework for conducting my thematic analysis by familiarizing myself with the data, coding, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming the themes, and creating a code map. I familiarized myself with the data by listening to the interviews multiple times and cleaning up my transcripts. I then re-read each transcript and searched for common themes. As I read each transcript, I highlighted common themes and created a key by indicating themes with a specific color. My initial coding produced 51 themes from my manuscripts and walk-through observations. I then reviewed my initial 51 themes and categorized them into 8 broader themes. Finally, I reviewed my 8 themes and categorized them into 3 themes that represented my initial 51 themes. I created a code map (Table 4.1) to demonstrate the process I used to discover my 3 main themes that will guide the findings in this chapter.

Presentation of the Findings

The open-ended interview protocol, provided in Appendix A, provided reflections from each participant during the course of each interview which yielded three broad themes. The first major theme was the effects of leadership which was supported by the sub themes: presence of administration, undervalued teachers, and lack of support. The second major theme was the nature of the community which was supported by the sub themes: professional relationships and profession comradery. The third major theme was school culture and pedagogy which was supported by the broad themes: acts of physical service, community values, and pedagogy. Each of these major themes answered the two research questions that guided this study. In this chapter, the two research questions will guide the presentation of the findings and the major themes will support the evidence from the research.

Research Question: Number One

The first research question in this study is how do private school teachers describe their beliefs on the value of servant leadership? This research question provides understanding to the problem presented in Chapter 1 as to why teachers act or do not act on their values and beliefs. Each of the three major themes answered this question by providing evidence from the data collected from teacher interviews and school walk-throughs.

The Nature of Community

The nature of community was a major theme that recurred in the answers of all 13 teachers as they described their values and beliefs of servant leadership. In the 7-item

measure of global leadership, Linden et al. (2015) confirmed that creating community value is a characteristic of servant leadership. Greenleaf (2002) believed that servant leaders play a key role in establishing a sense of community. When community is broken or not established, a servant leader will begin the process of "building a community-related group… that will restore an organization" (Greenleaf, 2002 p. 29). Spears (2005) also explained that servant leaders will "seek some means for building community among those who work within a given institution" (p. 29). Based on the previous researched discussed in the Chapter 2, it is not a surprise that the theme of community and relationships would be discovered in this research study. When asked about teacher beliefs and values of servant leadership and how servant leadership influenced the culture of their school, teachers described the importance of community.

Nine out of the 13 teachers interviewed described the importance of community and relationships when asked to define servant leadership. Teacher 10 from Southeast Christian School (TSE10) described a servant leader as someone who desires to "strengthen the relationship and have a tight bond with their entire team." Teacher 1 from Grace Christian School (TG1) also describes a servant leader as someone who has the ability to "create a team where everyone is on the same side." TG1 continued to explain that in this team everyone should have a sense that "we are all in this together." Teacher 11 from St. Andrews School (TSA11) described a teacher in his school that he believed best modeled servant leadership. TSA11 explained that this teacher is able to build relationships with students by "meeting them where they are at and approach them in ways that they understand instead of staying on an abstract level." TSA11 gave the

example of a teacher working out with the students in the Saint Andrews' weight room during this teacher's planning periods. The value that these teachers put on community is evident in how they describe and define servant leadership.

These teachers not only describe servant leadership in terms of community and relationship building, but all 13 teachers described the value of a positive and cohesive community within their school. From the perspective of a musician, TSE10 described a school in terms of an orchestra. He explained that just as each instrument has a role and value in the group, the same is true within the members of a school. TSE10 stated that "no matter how big or small your role is everyone should contribute and play a critical part in the education of students at our school." TG1 valued community by stating that she "leans heavily on her group [, and she] knows that her history department is always there for her." TG1 gave a story from her own personal experience that also demonstrated her value of community. She lost the opportunity to teach a class even though she was more qualified than the individual who was currently teaching the class. TG1 described that other teachers in her department displayed the values of servant leadership when they went to the administration of her school to support her and challenged the decision of the administrators. She said that

> Some of the best people I know in life I work with. Some of my closest friends are the people that I daily teach with and that is the best part of my job. Sometimes I will go over to the head of the history department and will bounce ideas off him, and he will give me a clear answer. It is the ability to make each

> other better by lovingly giving criticism that has helped me significantly as a teacher.

TG1 demonstrated that she valued servant leadership because of the importance that she placed on her community of teachers supporting her. TSE7 showed his value of community by describing his career at his previous company Hewlett Packard. He stated that "he went to work there because [he] wanted to work for servant leaders, and [he] always admired Mr. Hewlett and Mr. Packard." TSE7 described his previous company as being successful because they "valued the principles of teamwork." Once new leadership took over, the company began to decline because those values were no long acted on and believed to be important. TSE7 used that example of his previous company to describe that it is difficult to work in an environment that is not working together. He explains that in his current school he has

> to work very hard at home getting ready for class the next day or throughout the next week. I mean, it takes me hours late at night, and yet we still have teachers that will not do what is asked of them. We have to have our lesson plans filled out by 8:00am on Monday mornings, and there are teachers that just do not care. They just do not do it. We have teachers that cut corners in all sorts of ways, and I call that selfishness.

Through this example, TS7 is demonstrating his value for teamwork and community through his frustrations when those values of servant leadership are not upheld by his coworkers. These teachers express that they value a school community that emphasizes relationships and teamwork.

Teachers also demonstrated that they value building community and relationships within their classroom. TG5 shared how he has evolved as a classroom teacher over the years to be more of a servant leader. He explained that "he is more aware now of the other than academic needs that students have." TG5 stated that he now "focuses on developing relationships with students and is able to recognize their needs more clearly." He shared an example of building relationships with students by attending a German Christmas Festival in which many of his students were involved. He said:

> my family had planned some Christmas activities to get into the Christmas season. And so I thought maybe we should go up to the German Christmas festival, and we did. It was good to see some of the students there and develop a rapport and a relationship with them, so they know that I care. Sometimes teachers need to pause and take the time to say explicitly that they are available, and that they are there to meet the student's needs… That tends to resonate in my experience really profoundly with students. When they see that you are available and that you are a listening ear and want to develop a relationship with them, the students will understand that you care more about them than the grade they produce at the end of the class.

TSE6 also gave an example of how, as a servant leader, she values building community and relationships within her classroom. She said that she

> Tries to be an encourager. I also like building relationships with students that I don't find particularly easy to like. To me, maybe being a servant leader is like

making an effort with those kids, too. One of my personal goals is to make sure every kid that comes in my room feels like I know who they are.

TG4 also desired to build a community and relationships with the students in his classroom. He explained that he goes about building relationships by being "authentic with them as [he] teaches." TG4 said that "I try to be as much of myself in the classroom as I am outside the classroom." He believed by teaching in an authentic way he will be able to build community and gain the trust of his students in his classroom. TSE9 explained that "high school kids can sniff out whether someone is authentic and real or is a faker." TSA13 explained that she is "big on building relationships inside the classroom." She also emphasized authenticity as a way to build relationships with students. She said that she tries not to "teach with a haughty attitude." She explained that she "wants to bring [her] experiences to them, but not in a way where they feel like [she] thinks [she] is better than them. [She] desires that the classroom is a comfortable place." By giving examples of their own experiences within education, these teachers are demonstrating that they value the nature of community within their classroom and school. Even though these teachers describe their beliefs and value of community and relationships, they readily explained that they do not always act on those values.

Teachers in the study described that there is a disconnect from valuing the characteristic of community and relationships that are found in the practice of servant leadership and acting on those values. TSE6 explained that even though she values community and relationship within her classroom, she does not always act on those values because it takes "sacrifice on her part." She admits that "I am not perfect. There

are times when I do not do a good job at it (relationship building) because the papers that are piling up get my attention verses making an effort to see them (the students)." TSA12 supports TSE6 frustration by explaining that as a theology teacher he is glad that he has "the ability to share his stories with people. We (the theology department) are not set to a certain curriculum or standard which lends us the opportunity to reach out to kids… and to have the availability to be there for them." TS6 does not feel the same flexibility as an English teacher to have the ability to take time to build relationships with the students. This prevents her from building the strong community that TSA12 experiences in his classroom. TSE7 also pointed to a lack of time and the pressure of getting through his curriculum as a reason why he does not always act on what he values about relationship building and team work. He explained that as teacher

> you have to make 10,000 decisions on the go every day and out of 10,000 they are not all going to be right. I do not always rightly respond to students when they come in my classroom or when I'm busy working on something else. Sometimes I do not stop what I'm doing in the moment and answer their question. When I am teaching a math concept and a student asks a question that has already been asked two minutes ago, do I answer with a sigh of exasperation or do I just jump back into it again? I don't do it perfectly all the time. The same goes for how I interact with my colleagues. I don't do it perfectly all the time either.

TSE6 also describes reasons why her colleagues do not act on their values of relationship building found in servant leadership. She said that some of her colleagues "believe that their primary role is to educate. They have so much love for the content that

they sometimes lose sight of the student." TG4 expressed that there is a lack of training in the ability to build relationships with students. When talking about building relationships, he said "how do you do that? And when do you do that? There's not a class you take in college on [relationship building] that I am aware of." TG4 later described that he hears the issues that students are dealing with, and he "feel like someone has punched [him] in the gut." He explains that he is unsure what to do for these students but usually resorts to praying for them.

TG3 describes her frustrations with her inability to always act on her values of building relationship with students in the class by explaining that "there's so many areas I can improve in the aspect of supporting my students." After recently listening to a podcast on leadership, TG3 describes that she does not always feel like she is acting on her values. She says that this podcast made her "think of aspects that [she] wanted to focus on more as a servant leader in [her] classroom." She questioned herself by saying

> do I provide the support to my students to accomplish the overall goals that we need to accomplish in class? Do I know what they individually need to get out of the class for their own personal life and how to put it together for all of them?

TG3 points to a lack of student effort as a probable cause to why she does not always act on her values of relationship building with the students. She explains that it is difficult to

> make it a personal investment for them (her students). This is really challenging when you're teaching geometry. They really do not care about angles and signs. So I don't feel like I think of myself as a servant leader in my classroom. I feel like there is more work to be done… and I feel like in some aspects I am trying to

be a leader without serving. Like how am I serving them and supporting them when sometimes they don't want to be served and supported.

The teachers in this study expressed a clear value of community and relationship building as a servant leader, but some of them explained that there are outside factors that prevent them from acting on these values. The previous data points to the factors of time, lack of resources and education, and student motivation as potential reasons teachers feel that they are unable to act on their values and beliefs of servant leadership.

The Influence of Leadership

A major theme that was revealed through the data was the influence of leadership with-in a school. When teachers described their values and beliefs of servant leadership, they used the leaders of their school as a reference to describe the positive or negative influence of servant leadership. TSE6 expressed that she values the servant leadership qualities found in her high school principal. She stated that her high school principal is "the definition of servant leadership." TSE6 explained that she values the servant leadership approach that her principal takes to leading the high school because her principal is "willing to get her hands dirty." She gave an example of how her principal personally helped her after an event. TSE6 explained that she is

> in charge of running homecoming. At the end of the night my husband and I were there to break down the event. Well, she (TS6's principal) was there, and she said 'you all just go home. I can stay!' At first, I refused, but she said, 'no, really you all have done enough. Go home, and I can take it from here.' So in that moment I felt very supported. She is always willing to go the extra mile with things that do

> not always fall under her job description. We know that she cares about us and is willing to make all our lives easier.

TG4 also described that he values the qualities of support when his head of school leads like a servant. TG4 said that he has "never seen a man who is more willing to just pitch in and help" than his head of school. He explained that it does not matter what time of the day it is his head of school "is there for you." TSE9 was appreciative that her head of school was willing to do the little things to support the school staff. She recalled a time at a student overnight retreat when her head of school was willing to wake up early and make coffee for all the teachers. TSE9 believed that her head of school was making sure the teachers were taken care over, even in a small way. TSA12 felt like he was supported by the amount of freedom the administrative team at his school gave him. He said "I feel like they trust me to do my job, and I am not constantly having to look over my shoulder to see if they are checking up on me."

The teachers from this study also valued the influence that servant leadership had on the students. TG5 explained that as a servant leader a school administrator should display the quality of "meeting the needs of the students." TG5 believed that the leaders at his school do a "fair job" displaying the traits of a servant leader, and he sees that "there is a significant amount of improvement that can be done in meeting students' needs." TG5 explained the tension he sees within the leadership at his school by explaining that the school leaders

> tend to ask really good questions. They have done questionnaires in the past to ask our student body and our families what their needs are, and how they can best

> meet those needs. They then tend to not like the answers that they receive… [our school leaders] need to meet those needs even when they don't like the answers that they get back. That is where I see they need to develop a balance of meeting the needs of the people and staying true to the mission of the school.

TSE7 also shared that he valued how his principal models for the students by leading as a servant. He explained that a positive shift toward taking care of students has taken place in his school since his current principal has taken over leadership. TSE7 attributed this shift to the visibility and availability of his principal. He said that "she (his principal) has changed things up this year by doing the morning announcements herself." He described that a small change such as doing the announcements has gone a long way with building rapport with students and making sure their day gets off to the best start. TSA11 described the assistant principal at his school as "the best servant leader on campus." He believed that his assistant principal was the best servant leader because "he knows how to connect with the students." TSA11 said that the assistant principal "is able to call the boys to do a difficult task, and they still love him for it." The data gathered from these teachers indicate that they place a high value when the servant leadership qualities of their school leader positively reflects on the students in their school.

Teachers in this study also valued the presence and humility of their school leaders to do the mundane jobs in a school. TSE10 described his head of school "as willing to be on the front lines and do the heavy lifting." TSE10 gave an example of his head of school being willing to move chairs for a concert. TSE10 said that he knows it is a lot of work "moving equipment and sending kids on stage… but the administration is

always there ready to help." TG4 gave an example of his principal being willing to build a trophy case on his own time for the athletic department. TG4 continued to explain that "from picking up the trash off the ground wherever he walks to having a vision for the entire school, he is there doing it all." TG1 commended her principal for "being approachable… and quick to admit when he is wrong." When talking of her own classroom management style, TG1 believed that "if you do something wrong in front of your class you should say you are sorry and admit that you did something wrong." TG1 could be indicating that the values of servant leadership that she acts on, she would also like to see in the leaders of her school.

The data provided by the interviews of the teachers indicate that the individuals in leadership positions at a school have an influence on how teachers' values are played out. Teachers expressed frustration and an inability to act on their values and beliefs when they do not see the school leaders modeling those values and beliefs for them. TG1 described that it is difficult when her high school principal does not display attributes of servant leadership by being present. She said that she "could go two or three days without ever seeing him." TG1 said that "she has to seek him out if she ever needs something." As a veteran teacher, she believed that his lack of presence does not have as much an impact on her than it does younger teachers. TG1 said that the teachers in her school have to spend time "solving admin problems." She continued to add that

> The teachers should not be solving scheduling conflicts. If there was a presence of admin then that's something we shouldn't have to waste our time worrying about. I am a teacher. I should be teaching. I should be worried about my students, not

> whether or not this person is in this class or another… If the presence [of admin] was there, it would relieve a lot of the stress and burden that we carry, and we could just do our job.

TSA13 agreed that the presence of the leaders in a school is an important quality in servant leadership. TSA13 desired that those in leadership at her school would "pop in" and check in on teachers "to give them encouragement." She also believed that "education is a thankless job," and described teachers as constantly "pouring, pouring, and pouring into the lives of the kids." TSA13 asked the question "who is pouring into the teachers?" She expressed the difficultly as a teacher to act on your values and beliefs when the leadership of the school is not present and does not support the teachers. TG5 also referenced his concerns about the leadership of his high school principal by being "relational" with students without providing "guidance or instruction." TG5 believed that, as a servant leader, a person should be "relational but also effective." He continued to describe the difficulty it is, especially for young teachers to act on the values of leading relationally without "compromising the opportunity to instruct when the student's behavior is not what it should be." From the data provided by these teachers in their interviews, teachers could find it difficult to act on their own values of servant leadership if they do not see those values displayed in the leaders of their school.

School Culture and Pedagogy

When teachers were asked to describe their values and beliefs on servant leadership the theme of school culture and pedagogy became evident. When discussing the value of teaching servant leadership to students, all five teachers from Grace Christian

School expressed a value in programs that instructed students on the principles of servant leadership. All five teacher discussed student life initiatives such as the Global Outreach Activities and Leadership program (G.O.A.L) and the BETA Club. TG5 believed that the G.O.A.L program gave "students opportunities to serve their student body." TG1 also explained that she valued the G.O.A.L program because "it gets kids involved and teaches them how to lead other groups of kids." TG2 valued a Beta Club initiative where high school students would read to elementary students. She believed that this initiative "taught students how to serve." All five teachers from Grace Christian School also mentioned religious programs such as mission trips and weekly chapel programs that promoted the teaching of servant leadership. TG5 said he believes that "the chapel program meets the spiritual needs of the students… and allows them to serve in front of their peers." TG1 believed that the "mission trip to Ecuador definitely gives students opportunities to serve by helping people in other countries who have real physical needs."

Teachers from St. Andrew School described the value of the required ROTC program at the school which teaches important principles found in servant leadership. As TSA13 reflected on the ROTC program she described enjoying the growth students went through during their four years in the program. She said that "you would see boys enter the program with a chip on their shoulder… but by the time they were a senior, they had really learned how to be a respectful young man." TSA10 also appreciated the ROTC program because it "taught the boys much needed discipline" and gave them skills for "real life situations."

All 5 teachers from Southeast Christian School, mentioned clubs and student leadership initiatives that promoted servant leadership. TSE10 specifically mentioned a diversity club called the IRON club. In this club, TSE10 said that students "were able to have respectful conversations and hear students with a different perspective than theirs." TSE9 also talked about clubs that dealt with peer leadership which she believed "helped the students own the culture of their school." She said that these clubs "teach students some very specific communication skills and just good life skills in general." TSE7 believed that students learn servant leadership skill through being on an athletics team. He said that "being on a team teaches you how to lead and get along with people that you might not always interact within your friend group."

Even though all of the teachers interviewed expressed the values of club and extra-curricular activities that taught principles of servant leadership, some found it difficult to lead or volunteer to help out in these areas. TG2 explained that sometimes in the name of servant leadership "you are asked to do things that are totally outside your zone." Her head of school asked her to start a science club, but TG2 expressed her frustration that "sometimes you are asked to go outside and do something that is not in your wheelhouse for the betterment of the group." She believed that starting a science club is not something "she should have to do… [nor] is it something she would be successful at." She explained that she "feels like she is letting the school down," but she knows that it is not something she would like to do. TSE9 believed that many times teachers are asked to help out with extra-curricular activities "without compensation because education is viewed as ministry." She points to the sacrifice of having the spend

"time away from your family" to lead some extra-curricular activities as a reason why many teachers do not get involved. TSE6 also pointed to a time where she had to ask for more compensation because of the student leadership club and other extra-curricular responsibilities she had taken on. These teachers value the teaching of servant leadership to student, but there seems to be a strain on them when they are asked too much or are not fairly compensated. These reasons could prevent teachers from acting on their values and beliefs of the education of servant leadership.

Research Question: Number 2

The second research question in this study is how do private school teachers describe the influence servant leadership has on the culture of their school? As explored in the first two chapters, the culture of a school has been found to have a direct impact on student outcomes and teacher satisfaction (Davis, 2018; Deal & Peterson, 1991; Finley, 2016; Piotrowsky, 2016). Teachers play a key role in shaping the culture of a school, but how the values and beliefs of teachers as perceived servant leaders influence the culture of a school is unclear (Cunningham, 2008; Davis, 2020; Renfro, 2019). By asking teachers to describe the impact servant leadership has on the culture of their school, more understanding of how the values and beliefs of teachers reflect the culture of a school could be understood. The three main themes that were discovered from the data guide the analysis of interviews and walk-throughs to answers the research questions in this study.

The Nature of the Community

The nature of community and its impact on school culture was a reoccurring theme when analyzing the data from these three private schools. Southeast Christian

Academy has large open spaces inside and outside of the school that seem to welcome community and relationship building. Multiple teachers interviewed from Southeast Christian had posters on their walls with phrases such as "you are loved" and "you matter" which gives a sense of community building. Grace Christian School also desired to promote community and relationships. In a weekly newsletter, Grace Christian School advertised a Christmas 5K and fun run to benefit charity and to bring families together. Grace Christian also had an extensive display that read "What are They Up to Now" which highlighted the achievements and told stories of their alumni. St. Andrews School had the reoccurring word *brotherhood* in many of their communications and posters on the wall. In one of their newsletters an invitation to an annual tailgate of alumni, current students, and families was advertised before a football game. Many of these symbols in the buildings of the schools and communication from the schools pointed to a desire to build relationship and a positive community.

Teachers of all three schools expressed their value of community and relationships as characteristics of servant leadership that could potentially have a positive impact on the culture of their school. TSE11 described community building as taking place through interactions with students. He said that he will, at times, "physically crouch down to see his students at eye level…, all for the purpose of raising them up." TSE9 also desired to build community through relationships with students by "being a safe place for them to talk about issues they are facing." TSE9 gave the example of a student club she started called "IRON Club." She said that this club was "designed to help students talk about diversity and identity in a respectful and understanding way." She believed that this

club has positively influenced school culture by helping them "learn how to have respectful conversations and own problems instead of always blaming adults." TG4 credited teaching as a servant leader through building relationships with his students as to saving his career. TG4 explained that

> for the first 15 years of my career the leadership I displayed in my classroom happened by serendipity or happenstance. There was not a lot of planning that went into it. I wasn't praying for my students like I should. I was not trying to get to know them like I should. I was just trying to get through the day and teach… There was a one nucleus of guys that came through the school and they were quite rambunctious. They were not vile or wicked people. They were just rambunctious. I remember thinking to myself "why doesn't someone do something about their behavior?" That's when God put on my heart "that is what you are here for." I began to see my classroom as a bunch of sheep that needed to be shepherded, instead of pupils that needed to sit, be quiet, and learn. I realized that my number one goal was to be here for these kids and positively influence them.

The most important thing for TG4 became building relationships with his students which completely transformed the culture of his classroom. TSA12 believed that "showing an interest in kids' lives and making sure they are okay can never be unstated." TSA12 continued to say that "there are a lot of things done for kids by the dean and administrators that do not get broadcasted to the public" that are life changing for the students. TSA12 believed that by showing you care by the willingness to build relationships was a key ingredient in the tight-knit community at his school.

TSE9 believed that servant leadership helps develop a strong community through employing the characteristics of relational care and compassion. TSE9 gave an example of mentoring a colleague who was going through a difficult time. She said that her colleague had not felt "seen or celebrated recently." TSE9 said that this was perfect opportunity for her to be able to "help encourage her colleague through celebrating her God given talents." TG3 also believed that when teachers display servant leadership by building relationships a positive impact on the school is evident. She said that the teachers in her school "look out for each other and help each other." TG3 believed that simply knowing "what is going on in the lives" of her colleagues helped her school develop a close community.

However, teachers of two schools expressed the negative impacts on school culture that could be found by not valuing community and relationships that are part of the key characteristics of servant leadership. Teachers from Grace Christian School described a harmful divide within their school that had developed between the teachers and the administration. TG3 explained the harm of not valuing community and relationships had on her school. She described the lack of support she feels on a daily basis by saying that she has "maybe talked to [her] high school principal for 15 minutes in the past two months." TG3 believed that her principal will most likely support her, but she explained that she would have to be the one to "initiate any conversation for help." TG3, however, described her "team" as her "colleagues and fellow teachers." They were the ones building relationships and community within the school. TG5 agreed that at Grace Christian School "so many faculty members model servant leadership well." He

explained that it is the teachers that truly have relationships with the students, parents, and other faculty that allows them to know the "needs of the people." TG5 described that the administers "calibration is off," and he thinks "it is because of the relationships." TG5 went into more detail by depicting the head of the school as moving toward a more "figure head" position than a true servant leader. He explained that

> students hardly know who he (the head of school) is. So from that point I'm just like I do not believe he is a servant leader. A servant leader is out and visible. A servant leader has his hand on the pulse of the needs of the people. I hate that because I think it was there for a long time, but I think in recent years, as we've grown, there has been a loss and sort of disconnect of real focus on servant leadership.

TG1 also explained that when "administration does not use the principles of servant leadership in making their decisions" she is negatively impacted. TG1 gave an example when her high school principal "pitted faculty members against each other." She saw the negative impact on the culture of her school by creating disharmony rather than community. TG1 also explained that if students have "needs and issues or if they need someone, they are not looking to administration for that." She believed that students were going to teachers "because of the relationships" they had with the students. TG1 said that "this is an issue… if students need to access something with a little more power than a class-room teacher, they should be comfortable going to an administrator."

The teachers from Southeast Christian school presented the same community divide between the administration of the school and the teachers. However, the teachers

at Southeast Christian School described the administration as portraying the values of servant leadership and not the faculty. The school leaders were described as being "a visible presence on campus." Conversely, TSE6 described many teachers as doing the "bare minimum" in regards to volunteering and building relationships outside of the school with students. She continued to explain that "maybe part of the reason I like it here so much is because I feel like, even if my colleagues aren't doing it (relationship building) well, the leadership is." TSE8 believed that it is important for "students to be able to develop good relationships with their teachers." When asked the number of teachers who build those relationship as a servant leader, TSE8 said it would be the "minority of teachers" at Southeast Christian School. TSE8 explains that he does feel "supported" by his high school principal because she is "on our side, she is with us." TSE8 explains that the "overwhelming love and care" his principal has for her students is apparent which leads to "the students respecting her even if they do not like her." TSE7 agreed with TSE8 that he sees some attempts by teachers to build relationships, but it is "far from being unanimous." TSE7 also agreed that the administration models servant leadership by building relationships with students and teachers. TSE7 said that he knows that administrators at his school are "always going to be there to back [him] up."

Grace Christian School and Southeast Christian school both provided perspectives of a culture that was harmed by the discontinuity of community when servant leadership is not displayed by both the teachers and the administrators. This could result in the lack of support of teachers and students, a lack of understanding and meeting the needs of the

community, and the inability to provide an environment where students are known and loved.

The Influence of Leadership

Teachers from all three schools believed that the individuals who held leadership positions had directly influenced the culture of their school. TG4 talked about the humility that was on display as his head of school led. He described his head of school as "not having an ego which a lot of people in his position could develop." TG4 explained that many heads of school who stayed in one place for that long could have viewed themselves as "building the school," but his head of school gives all the credit to the staff and teachers. TG4 believed that this type of servant leadership has a trickle-down effect in the organization when humility is "modeled from the top down." TSE8 valued the characteristics of humility and modeling that he saw in his principal as a servant leader. He described his principal not as a leader who "sat up in an ivory tower," but he described her as some who is "with us" and is "almost nurturing." It is through this posture that he believed students and teacher have come to respect her which "makes it easier for us to be bought in." TSA12 described the leadership in his school as servant leaders by saying "nobody acts like a job is beneath them." He even told a story of when the principal called him to see if he needed help moving into his house when he first was hired to work at his school from another state. TSA12 said that "it is things like that which allow you to know you matter and makes you really want to do a good job here."

When teachers from all three schools described their principals as a servant leader, they felt empowered and supported. TSE10 described the leadership at his school

of knowing how to "properly delegate jobs" to those who had expertise. TSE10 believed that teachers felt "empowered" because of the trust and delegation that was seen in the leadership at his school. TSA13 also valued the characteristics of empowerment that she saw in her principal as a servant leader. She believed that teachers are not "micromanaged" at her school which allows them to be free to teach in their field as they see fit. TSE8 also saw the importance of knowing that his principal "is on his side." When describing his principal as a servant leader, TSE8 felt "supported" and he knew his principal was always going to "back [him] up and not throw [him] under the bus." TSE8 said that the way his principal communicates "shows that she is on your side and is willing to throw you a lifeline." TG4 also believed that one of the traits of a servant leader that her principal demonstrated was his "willingness to jump in and help." She said that if she "needed help solving a problem [she] could call or text him and he would be willing to listen and help."

Teachers from Grace Christian School and Southeast Christian school both talked about the effects the traits of transparency and authenticity had on the culture when displayed by their principal as a servant leader. TSE9 described her principal as being very "authentic," and the teachers and students trust her "to be the same person in every space she is in." TSE9 explained that when acting as a servant leader, teachers and students are "comfortable and are their real self" around the principal. TSE9 explained because of this authenticity her principal makes "everyone feel like they are in on a big secret," and everyone "is just bought in" to her mission and vision." TG1 described her principal as being authentic and having integrity. She said she "knows for a fact that he

(her principal) is not a liar." Integrity is important to TG1 as she "feels like she can trust him," but she believes sometimes "he is too transparent." TG1 described her principal as maybe having "the wrong concept of servant leadership" when it comes to transparency. At times she wished that her principal would "step up and be a leader" instead of "always showing the man behind the curtain." TG1 believed that too much transparency could be a weakness and a cause for people to become uneasy or second guess her principal's leadership. She believed her principal needed to make a decision and "not back down."

The teachers from Grace Christian School were the only teachers to describe the negative cultural impact a school leader could have when they are not being a servant leader. TG5 stated that he believes his head of school was once a servant leader but has now moved to a "figurehead sort of position." He sees a clear indication of this by his head of school "not knowing the needs of his people" and the school. The example TG5 gave of the negative cultural impact by his head of school not displaying the traits of a servant in the hiring process of his school. TG5 explained that

> in the personnel hires that have been made in recent years have been incredibly unsuccessful. I don't know if they would ever admit that or express that, but from my perspective, the turnover rate has been very high in our elementary and high school programs… We have told our administration year after year that we need an onboarding process for our new teachers because our pace here is remarkably faster than a lot of other places. Our school can be quite overwhelming for new teachers. We asked for a new employee development program. If you are recognizing the needs of the people, then you would see that new teachers are

> getting overwhelmed. In fact, we have a problem retaining new teachers, so let's create a new employee training program, but the new program has never happened.

TG5 showed his frustration that the leaders in his school have a "lack of discernment" and do know how to "set people up for success." TG3 agreed that there is a negative cultural impact when the leaders of her school do not portray the characteristics of servant leadership. She described her last school had a "feeling like we were all in it together… and the teachers felt like they were the decision makers." By comparing her current school to her previous, TG3 said there are "two big things that I feel are lacking here. I am not empowered to do what I need to do, and I rarely get asked what I need."

The teachers in this study described the effects they believe servant leadership has on the culture of their school when modeled by their school leaders. Teachers brought up the themes of feeling empowered, teamwork, and supported when their school leaders lead like a servant. Some teachers also brought up a negative effect their leaders have on culture when they do not employ the traits of servant leadership. Teachers saw their school leaders as not understanding the needs of the people within their organization which lead to mistrust and the feeling of not being supported.

School Culture and Pedagogy

While conducting my walk-throughs of each school, I noticed graphics and symbols on the walls that could indicate how servant leadership could influence the culture of the school. At Grace Christian school, I saw a plaque with names of students dating back 30 years who had won the "Christian Leadership Award." I also saw fliers

promoting a service project to collect goods for under-resourced people in Equator. At Southeast Christian School I also noticed fliers advertising a Christmas food drive to help those who are in need in their community. At St. Andrews School I noticed many military symbols that referred to important values such as integrity, service, and leadership. In all three of the schools the symbols indicated that servant leadership was a part of the culture of the school.

Teachers from all three schools indicated that giving students the opportunity to learn about and practice servant leadership had a positive impact on the culture of their school. TSA13 said that students are "given lots of service opportunities through community service" at her school. She explained that servant leadership is a "part of the environment… and everyone pitches in when something needs to get done." TG3 described programs such as the "Beta Club and Honor Society" that allow student to "have opportunities to expose them to servant leadership." TG5 believed that these clubs and service opportunities help build "a sense of community" and "gives students opportunities to serve each other." TSE10 pointed specifically to the Music Honor Society at his school which gives student opportunities to "use their musical gifts to serve others." He believed that this is an important skill that his students are learning now that he hopes they will continue to use throughout the rest of their life.

Teachers from all three schools used religious programs as examples by which students are taught the principles of servant leadership. TSE10 believed that the mission trips offered by her school provided students the opportunities to learn and act out servant leadership. TG1 also believed that the mission trips offered at her school taught servant

leadership to the students and drew the whole school "closer together" when collecting items to help people serve on the mission trip. TG5 brought up the chapel program and believed it taught students important principles of "leading in front of their peers." TSE9 also believed that chapels were important to the culture of the school and allowed students the opportunity to focus on "spiritual, social, and emotional issues." TSA12 described his Theology class as a place where he could "teach the principles of servant leadership." He viewed his class as an important time to build relationships with the students.

Some teachers expressed their concern of the potential negative impact service projects and leadership clubs could have on the culture of the school. TG3 was concerned that some of these service projects overwhelmed and consumed too much of the students' time. She listed all of the activities that students are involved in, and she believed adding more things to their workload could "exhaust and burn out the students." TG3 also mentioned that these clubs can be "forced" because student are "required to report hours." She also believed that these clubs "leave out other students who would like to serve… because they maybe do not meet the academic requirements." TSE7 also expressed concerns with the teaching of servant leadership at his school. He explained that "there is a disconnect between what we teach in chapel and what we actually do here as a school." TSE7 believed that teaching servant leadership "starts right here where I am sitting at my desk." Both of these teachers expressed concerns that the teaching of servant leadership leads to a negative cultural impact if the students are overworked or it is done in an unauthentic way.

Conclusion

At each of the three private schools, I interviewed high school teachers and used open-ended questionnaire which allowed them to discuss their values and beliefs of servant leadership and how they believed servant leadership influenced the culture of their school. I also collected data by conducting school walk-throughs that would help validate the data provided by the teacher interviews. From the data, I discovered three major themes: the influence of leadership, the nature of community, and school culture and pedagogy. These three themes answered the two research questions that were posed in Chapter 1.

The first research questions in this study is how do private school teachers describe their beliefs on the value of servant leadership? Many teachers in this study demonstrated that they valued servant leadership. Teachers described that they attempted to demonstrate and act on the characteristics of servant leadership in the classroom. They valued the characteristics of humility, community, ethical behavior, and emotional care. Many teachers believed that positive outcomes could been seen in their classroom when these characteristics were valued and acted upon. However, some teachers believed that they did not always act on the characteristics of servant leadership due to vary factors. Teachers also expressed the value of these characteristics of servant leadership when seen modeled by the leaders of their school. Teachers described that they felt supported and empowered when the leaders of their school acted on the traits of a servant leadership. However, some teachers felt like servant leadership could be used as a tool to mistreat teachers. Teachers gave examples of leaders asking them to work extra hours without

appropriate compensation or burdening teacher an excess amount of work in the name of servant leadership.

The second research question is how do private school teachers describe the impact servant leadership has on the culture of their school. Many teachers gave positive example of how servant leadership influenced the culture of their school. Teachers gave examples of clubs, service projects, and religious activities that taught students the traits of servant leadership. Many teachers believed that these programs positively affected the culture of their school by giving students the opportunities to lead others through acts of service. However, some teachers described their frustration with these programs. Some teachers believed that students did not truly understand servant leadership but were involved in this programs to receive community service hours and fulfill requirements to enter college. Many teachers also described the positive influence teachers and school leaders have on the culture of a school when they act on the traits of servant leadership. Teachers described a culture that met the needs of the community, invited collaboration and team-work, and evoked a sense of positive morale. However, some teachers believed that clear direction was lacking when the leaders of their school over emphasized the servant leadership trait of building relationships. The lack of clear direction and leadership harmed the culture by individuals not understanding the vision from the school demonstrated by the school leaders.

In Chapter 5, I will discuss in more detail the findings from this study. I will review the implication of my findings from the themes. I will also provide recommendation for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A teacher's values and beliefs get to the core of who they are as an individual and the reason behind the actions that they take in the classroom (Borg, 2015). Teachers' beliefs are also an important factor in understanding teachers' goals and behaviors. (Barni et al., 2019). Furthermore, teachers' values and belief are also important to shaping the culture of a school (Davis, 2018; Finley, 2016). Bolman and Deal (2021) explained that the members within the organization, such as teachers, are instrumental in establishing the culture of a school. However, teachers do not always act on their values and beliefs (Fives & Gill, 2015). Diehl and Golann (2023) found there are many outside factors such as institutional pressure that can have an influence on determining if teachers will act on their values and beliefs. The purpose of this study is to examine why teachers choose to act on their values and beliefs and how teachers play a role in shaping the culture of their schools when they act on their values and beliefs of servant leadership.

Servant leadership was used in this study as the theoretical framework to better understand teachers' values and beliefs and the influence they have on school culture. Thirteen teachers from three private schools were asked questions through an open-ended protocol about their beliefs of servant leadership and how they believed servant leadership influenced the culture of their school. The following researched questions were asked and guided this study:

1) How do private school teachers describe their beliefs on the value of servant leadership?

2) How do private school teachers describe the influence servant leadership has on the culture of their school?

Discussion of Findings

All thirteen teachers expressed that they had positive beliefs towards and valued the traits of servant leadership. All thirteen teachers expressed that they valued the trait of humility and leading by example found in servant leadership. TG5 stated that he appreciated the posture of a servant leader as one who "leads in the background which allows him to recognize the needs of the people" inside his organization. TSE6 expressed her gratitude when a leader "selflessly puts the interests of others first, and then inspires others to do the same." Nine out of the thirteen teachers described their appreciation for the value of the team-work and community as a trait found in servant leadership. TG1 appreciated that a servant leader "create[s] a team where everyone is on the same side." Four out of the thirteen teachers expressed their value of transparency which they believed to be a trait of servant leadership. TG4 explained that he thought it is important in education to "be real with young people," and he believed that when acting as a servant leader a person is able to be transparent with their followers. The data collected from the interviews indicates that all thirteen teachers had positive beliefs of the values of servant leadership.

All thirteen teachers expressed the desire to display the traits of a servant leader in the classroom based on their positive beliefs of servant leadership. TSE7 described himself as a servant leader in his classroom by trying "serve them (his students) and their interests by creating the kind of environment that everyone can learn in." TSA13

explained that she tries to act on the values of servant leadership in her classroom by "not leading or teaching in a haughty way." She desired to be approachable and to "make her classroom a comfortable place." TG5 believed that he acted on the traits of servant leadership by being "aware of the emotional needs in his classroom." He believed he was a servant leader by being "flexible and graciously accommodating the emotional needs… of the students." Each of the thirteen teachers expressed different ways that they attempted to act as a servant leader in the classroom and with their coworkers because they valued servant leadership. However, some teachers expressed their frustration when they did not or could not act on their beliefs and values of servant leadership.

Finding 1- Outside factors

Not all thirteen teachers stated that they consistently acted on their positive beliefs of servant leadership. TG3 pointed to the difficulty of acting on her positive beliefs of servant leadership when students "do not want to be served and supported." She found it difficult to serve her students when "they really do not care" about the subject matter in her class. TSE6 explained that it was difficult to act as a servant leader in the classroom when she was overwhelmed with excess work. She said that many times "the papers that are piling up [would] get [her] attention verses making an effort to see" her students. TSE7 also pointed to a lack of time and an excess amount of work as an indication of why he does not always act on his values and beliefs of servant leadership. TSE7 said that sometimes he is "busy working on something else" and does not always "stop what [he is] doing in that moment and answer the questions." TG4 pointed to an earlier time in his career when he allowed the "daily stresses of the class room" to distract him from

acting on his values and beliefs of servant leadership. It was only later in his career that he was able to put aside those stressors and focus on "building relationships with his students as the shepherd of his classroom." Teachers in this study pointed to outside factors such as being overworked, a lack of student engagement, and a lack of focus on relationships with students as being possible factors of preventing them from acting on their values and beliefs of servant leadership.

Finding 2- A lack of support

Many teachers in this study pointed to a lack of support from students, coworkers, and the leaders of the school as preventing them from acting on their values and beliefs of servant leadership. TSE7 explained that it was difficult to for him to act as a servant leader when he felt like his coworkers around him were not displaying the traits of a servant leader. He described his coworkers as being "selfish" and "cutting corners" which discouraged him from acting on his positive beliefs of servant leadership. TSA13 also explained that it is difficult for her to act on her beliefs and values of servant leadership when she does not feel supported. She pointed to a lack of support from the leaders of her school as being a potential reason that she does not act on her values and beliefs. TSA13 wished that there would be more "check-ins" and expressions of "appreciation of teachers" from the leadership at her school which she believed would make a "huge difference" in her being able to act on her values of servant leadership. TG1 also pointed to the lack of presence of her principal that could prevent teachers at her school from acting on their traits of servant leadership. She said that she could "go weeks without laying eyes" on her principal. She believed that this had a negative influence on the

"younger teachers who need guidance and direction in their classrooms." From the data collected in the interviews, Teachers indicated that a lack of support from students, co-works, and leaders in the school could be factors that prevented them from acting on their values and beliefs.

Finding 3- The community influence on culture

Most teachers believed that when they and the leaders of their school acted on the traits of servant leadership, a positive influence on the culture of their school took place. Ten out of thirteen teachers indicated that when the teachers and leaders of their school acted on the traits of servant leadership a positive sense of community and support could be felt. The teachers in this study used phrases such as "we are all in this together," "everyone is on the same side," and "everyone pitches in and knows their part" when describing the culture of the school when teachers and leaders acted like a servant. Five out of thirteen teachers in this study also reported feelings of empowerment when the traits of servant leadership are acted on by the teachers and leaders of their schools. TSE6 explained that she felt empowered by her principal because her principal acts like a servant leader and is "willing to get her hands dirty." TG5 explained that when he acted on the values of servant leadership in his classroom, he believed students understood that he "cares more about them as a person than the grade they produce at the end of the class." Data from the walk-throughs and document collection supported the finding from the teacher interviews. A sense of community was felt when walking through the schools by looking at positive graphics on the walls and spaces for students to gather in community. From the data collected in the interviews, the teachers in this study indicated

that when teachers and the leaders of their school acted on the traits of servant leadership a positive influence on the culture could be felt. Teachers described a sense of community, support, and empowerment.

All of the teachers in this study pointed to different clubs, religious activities, and service opportunities as examples of teaching students the traits of servant leadership. Many of the teachers in this study believed the teaching of servant leadership had a positive influence on the students and culture of the school. TG1 explained that these programs "teaches them (students) how to lead other groups of kids." TSA10 described a program that taught traits of servant leadership as giving his students skills for "real life situations." TG5 believed that service projects allowed students to build "a sense of community." From the data collected in the interviews, many teachers believed that the opportunities for students to serve others had a positive influence on the culture of their school and strengthened the community feel.

Finding 4- Burn out

Some teachers believed that when they or the leaders of their schools acted on the traits of servant leadership, a negative influence on the culture of a school could take place. Five of the thirteen teachers indicated that they felt overworked and mistreated when the leaders of their school acted on the traits of servant leadership. TSE9 pointed to the teachers at her school being asked to coach a team or be in charge of a club which took "time away from family" without being "properly compensated" in the guise of serving the "ministry" of the school. TG2 explained that she was asked to create an after school club that she felt was outside her "wheelhouse." Her principal asked her to start

this club for the "betterment of the group," but she felt frustrated because it would "not be something she would be successful at." From the data in the interviews, some teachers expressed that they at times felt overworked and were asked to fulfill expectations outside of their expertise in the name of servant leadership. This lead to teachers feeling frustrated and overworked which they believed could have a negative influence on the culture of their school.

Teachers also listed concerns that the teaching of servant leadership could negatively influence the culture of their schools. TG2 explained that many students felt "exhausted and burnt out" due to too many service projects and servant leadership initiatives. TG3 and TSE7 also posed a problem with service projects when students do not understand servant leadership. TG3 said that service projects could be "forced" by requiring students to "report hours." TSE7 believed service projects could cause a "disconnect" in understanding that servant leadership is not something just done by collecting items for charity or going on a mission trip. From the data collected in the interviews, teachers indicated that students could be overworked and misunderstand true servant leadership through service project and other community service activities. They indicated that when students are burnt out and have a misunderstanding of servant leadership, a negative influence could be felt in the culture of their schools.

Discussion of Major Themes

The data collected in this study of teacher interviews, school walk-throughs, and document collection was carefully analyzed and coded by using Bruan and Clark's (2006) six-phase framework for conducting thematic analysis. By analyzing the data, I

discovered three main themes: the nature of community, the influence of leadership, and school culture and pedagogy. These three main themes support the findings of this research study.

Theme 1- The Nature of Community

The nature of community was a main theme that was discovered when analyzing the data from teacher interviews, school walk-throughs, and document collection. This theme of community is also supported in the findings of this research study. In "Finding 2- A Lack of Support," major factors in teachers' inability to act on their values and beliefs of servant leadership was due to a lack of relationships and the inability of school leaders to build community. This finding is consistent with the research from Hannula (2012) which described teacher values and beliefs as being dependent to the culture and the community of the school. Teachers in this study indicate that a lack of a strong community could affect how they act on their values and beliefs.

The theme of the nature of community also supports "Finding 3- The Community Influence on Culture." Teachers in this study believed that when the traits of servant leadership were acted on by the teachers and the leaders at their school a positive influence on the culture was felt. This finding is consistent with the research of Jones (2018) who discovered that teachers' actions could have a positive influence on the culture of a school. Boleman and Deal (2021) agree that a large part of school culture is developed through the actions of teachers and school leaders. The teachers in this study agreed that by employing the traits of servant leadership, a positive influence on the culture of a school could be seen.

Theme 2- The Influence of Leadership

The influence of leadership was a main theme that was discovered from analyzing the data from teacher interviews, school walk-throughs, and document collection. All the teachers in this study referenced that the leaders in their schools greatly influenced their values and beliefs and the culture of the school. This theme of the influence of leadership supports "Finding 1- Outside Factors." Teachers in this study pointed to the burden of excess work as a reason that they could not act on their values and beliefs of servant leadership. Larkin (2021) reported that of a lack a planning time for teachers could fall on the responsibility of school leaders. It is the school leaders that are responsible for creating school schedules and school policy that increasingly put pressure on teachers (Bacher-Hicks et al., 2022). Some of the teachers in this study described an environment where teachers are overburdened with work and are unable to act on their values and beliefs of servant leadership. Also, some teachers reported a lack of organization from school leaders which created added work and stress which left less time for planning and preparation in the classroom.

The theme of leadership influence also supports "Finding 2- A Lack of Support." Teachers indicated that they expected the majority of the support in the classroom to originate from the leaders of their schools. This finding is supported by the research of Berkovich and Eyal (2017) who discovered that when a school leader creates an atmosphere of nurturing, a sense of pride, and security a positive reflection on teacher performance has been recorded, but when an atmosphere of public shaming and embarrassment is established, a sense of mistrust breeds in a school community which adversely shapes teacher performance. Teachers in this study felt that when they were not

supported by their school leaders, it was difficult for them to act on their beliefs and values of servant leadership. Conversely, teachers in this study appreciated when their school leaders modeled servant leadership. Teachers in this study indicated that when they saw their beliefs and values modeled by their school leaders, it could be easier for them to act on those values and beliefs in their classrooms.

The theme of leadership influences also supports "Finding 3- Community Influence on Culture." Teachers in this study pointed to school leaders as being the individuals who were responsible for creating a community feel in their school. Grissom, et al. (2021) explained that it is of utmost importance for principals to create "strategies that promote teachers working together authentically with systems of support to improve their practice and enhance student learning" (p. XV). Bertz (2012) agreed that "a servant leader created shared vision among staff members to steer an organization in the same direction and in this context towards fostering a learning community" (p. 287). The findings in this study are consisted with Betz (2012) and Grissom, et al. (2021). Teachers in this study indicated that school leaders play a large part in creating a sense of community that will influence the teachers, the students, and the culture of their schools.

Finally, the theme of leadership influence supports "Finding 4- Burn Out." Some teachers in this study pointed to the leaders of the school as being responsible for over-burdening teachers with extra responsibilities. Teacher from this study believed that the leaders of their schools asked them to be a servant leader by volunteering for more responsibilities than they could handle. This lead to the teachers feeling overwhelmed and burnt out. Miller and Youngs (2021) discovered that teacher burnout could be a

direct correlation with the responsibilities put on teachers by their school leaders. The findings in this study correlate with Miller and Young (2021). Some teachers in this study believed that their school leaders could cause teachers in their schools to burn out by asking them to take on too many responsibilities as a servant leader.

Theme 3- School Culture and Pedagogy

The theme of school culture and pedagogy was also a major theme that was discovered when analyzing the data from teacher interviews, school walk-throughs, and document collection. The theme of school culture and pedagogy supports "Finding 3- The Community Influence on Culture." Many teachers point to school culture and pedagogy as a key factor in helping teachers and school leaders act on the values of servant leadership which lead to a positive influence on the culture of their schools. Deal and Peterson (2016) discovered that school leaders had the ability to turn a once toxic school culture into one that was thriving and productive. The answers given by the teachers in this study align with the research of Deal and Peterson (2016). Teachers in this study indicated that when their school leaders acted on the traits of servant leadership a positive change in the culture could be felt. Specifically, Shepherd (2018) showed that when teachers and school leaders act as servant leaders, school culture could improve. Teachers in this study also indicated that they had the ability to improve school culture by acting on the traits of servant leadership.

The theme of school culture and pedagogy also supported "Finding 4- Burn Out." Teachers described that pedagogy and school culture was a key reason that students could become overwhelmed by servant leadership. Teachers believed that students would

simply conform to the culture of the school and involve themselves in service opportunities without genuinely understanding servant leadership. Community service became a box to be checked instead of virtue to strive for. Some teachers in this study also indicated that the culture of their schools could create too many demands on teachers to lead extracurricular activities. Deal and Peterson (2016) described a toxic school culture as one which puts too many demands on the people within the organization. Some teachers in this study also described the negative influence on culture that took place when putting too many demands on students and teachers in their schools.

Implications for Practice

The major findings that were discovered in this research study from the themes identified in the data may have implications for practice in the field. Teachers in this study indicated that more support from the leaders of their school is needed to act on their values and beliefs. This could be an important motivation for school leaders to identify ways they can better support and model positive behavior for the teachers in their schools. Formally, this could be done by school leaders conducting research within their own schools to identify areas in which teachers feel a lack of support. The findings from the research conducted by school leaders could change systems of procedures, add additional personnel, or better understand how to model positive behavior. Teachers in this study also indicated positive influence on culture when students, teachers, and school leaders acted on the traits of servant leadership. School leaders could consider placing more emphasis on understanding and teaching the principles of servant leadership. Formally, this could be done through a focus on professional development and teacher

training, implementing the principles of servant leadership in curriculum, and fostering a servant leadership model for other leaders in the school to follow. Specific implications for practice are found when identifying the findings in this research study.

Implication 1- More Support for Teachers is Needed

From Finding 1 and 2, some teachers in this study indicated that the reason they did not act on their values and beliefs of servant leadership was due to a lack of support. The teachers in this study described the lack of support as stemming from a lack of motivation from students, a lack of time to complete daily responsibilities, and a lack of planning and modeled behavior of school leaders. A lack of time for teachers to complete daily responsibilities has been researched and reported to be a reason teachers are burned out, feel unsupported, and are difficult to be retained (Bacher-Hicks et al., 2022; Larkin, 2021; Miller & Youngs, 2021). Larkin (2021) specifically researched the role of the principal as a factor for creating ways to increase teacher productivity and retention by allowing more time to accomplish daily tasks. Research from the previous researchers and the data collected form this study might encourage school leaders to find ways to allow teachers to have more time to complete their daily responsibilities. As indicated in the findings from this research, more time to complete daily duties could potentially help teachers act on their values and beliefs.

School leaders could also discover ways to support their teachers by allowing them to act on their values and beliefs. Williams (2018) discovered a direct link between leadership style and teacher motivation. Principals who showed a transformational style of leadership were a significant predictor of teacher motivation, feelings of support, and

teacher satisfaction which increased the likelihood that teachers would remain in the profession of education (Williams, 2018). Also, Helms (2017) "indicated a positive relationship with the likelihood that teachers would remain in their current teaching positions if their principals exhibited servant leadership characteristics" (p. 89). School leaders could seek ways to adopt a transformational style of leadership such as servant leadership that could assist in supporting the teachers in their school. School leaders could seek out ways to obtain professional development or enroll in degree programs that would help them to learn more about transformational leadership and challenge them to continue to develop as a leader. Superintendents and school principals could also look for the traits of servant leadership in candidates they hire as school leaders. If superintendents hired more school leaders who lead as a servant, teachers could feel supported and act on their values and beliefs.

Implication 2- Community is Essential

The research from this study indicated that when teachers and leaders acted on and valued the traits of servant leadership, a positive sense of community, relationship building, and support could be felt in the culture of the school. Research indicates that the role of the principal is the most important role in shaping the culture and effectiveness of a school (Filoramo, 2022; Grissom, et al. 2021). Marsh (2017) pointed out that a principal must focus heavily on "community building and prioritizing relationships" (p. 4). Berkovich and Eyal (2017) explained that when a principal creates an atmosphere of nurturing, a sense of pride, and security, a positive influence on teacher performance has been recorded. Based on the data of this study, teachers indicated that when their school

leaders acted on the traits of servant leadership, a positive influence was seen on the culture of their schools, specifically by having a community feel. Principals and school leaders could seek ways to lead like a servant as a way of cultivating a positive community feel as a part of the culture of their school. School leaders could invest in training by focusing on key traits of leadership developed by Spears (2010) such as humility, being relational, and putting the needs of other first.

Teachers in this study also reported that they believed they had a positive influence on the culture of their school by acting as a servant leader to create community and build relationships. Jeyaraj and Gandolfi (2019) explained that teachers who act as servant leaders place a high emphasis on building relationships with their students. Through these relationships a teacher becomes in tune to the needs of the students which allows them to care for the students' wellbeing (Noland & Richards, 2015). If teachers were trained and encouraged to be servant leaders in their classroom, positive relationships could be established which could create a healthy school culture. School leaders could look to formally train their teachers to act as servant leaders in the classroom to create a positive influence on their schools' culture. Also, higher education institutions could add to their pedagogy ways to train teachers to develop servant leadership characteristics which could allow them to build positive future relationships with students. Lastly, school leaders could also look for traits of servant leadership in candidates through the hiring process as a means to potentially create a positive culture of community in their schools.

Implication 3- Burn Out could be Dangerous

From the data recorded in this study, some teachers indicated that when servant leadership was practice by their school leaders too many responsibilities were placed on teachers. Rangel (2017) identified that principals have a strong influence on a school by their managerial duties such as assigning teachers tasks and creating class schedules. Maslach and Jackon (1981) were the originators in defining *burn out* which they described as the gradual exhaustion, cynicism, and loss of commitment that had been observed in the context of the workplace. Teacher burnout has been recorded to occur due to a lack of support from school leaders and colleagues, an overwhelming responsibility of extracurricular activities, and the lack of ability to find quality relationships within a school (Pakarinen & Saloviita, 2019). Pakarinen and Saloviita (2019) explained that teacher burn out in a school can lead to a lack of retention of teachers, poor performance of students, and an unhealthy school culture. According to the data collected in this study, Principals and school leaders could evaluate extra work they are requiring of teachers. School leaders could also self-evaluate the motivation behind asking teachers to help lead extracurricular activities and insure teachers are justly compensated. Further evaluation is needed from school leaders to see if they are requiring teachers to do too much work as a means to serve the mission of the school.

Additionally, some teachers also reported in this study that they felt some students were being overburdened by the amount of service initiatives and opportunities at their schools. Curran and Madigan (2020) explained that just as burnout has been discovered in teachers, it can also apply to students. Students are experiencing burnout from many factors such as long school days, being involved in too many extracurricular activities,

family or social burdens outside the classroom, and outside pressures to succeed (Curran & Madigan, 2020). According to the data collected in this study, some teachers believed that students were experiencing burnout from too many service projects and servant leadership initiatives at their schools. School leaders and teachers could evaluate the mission of the service initiatives at their schools to insure students understand the purpose of servant leadership. School leaders and teachers could also evaluate service opportunities given to students and service requirements students must complete to prevent the potential of burn out from taking place.

Limitations of the Study

There are limitations to this study. Thirteen teachers from three private religious schools in the Southeastern part of the US are represented in this study. The timeframe of this study was short and does not include longitudinal data. Being an administrator at a private religious school in the Southeastern part of the US, I could have biases with regards to this study and the use of servant leadership.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations for future research are designed to further add to the literature on the topic of teachers' beliefs and values, school culture, and servant leadership. More research is needed to better understand how and why teachers act on their values and beliefs. More research is also needed to better understand how teachers and school leaders influence the culture of their school when acting on the traits of servant leadership. The recommendations of this study is to further the scope of research,

study teacher beliefs and school culture over a longer period of time, and research teacher beliefs and school culture from a quantitative format.

Recommendation 1- Expand the Scope of the Study

This qualitative study was limited to three religious school in the Southeastern part of the US. Geographical location and the type of school could influence how teachers act on their values and beliefs. I would recommend that the sample size of this study be extended to include a larger and more diverse sample of teachers in other areas of the US. The study was also limited to researching teachers in private religious schools. More research could also be added to the body of literature if this study was completed in public schools or non-religious private schools.

Recommendation 2- Longitudinal Study

A limitation of this study was that it took place in a short time period. It could be beneficial to examine how teachers act on their values and beliefs over a longer period of time. Research over a longer period of time could also be beneficial in determining how teachers feel servant leadership influences the culture of their school. Many teachers in this study referred to themselves as having a change in values and beliefs the longer they were in the field of education. A longer study could add to the body of research by understanding how these values and beliefs change over time.

Recommendation 3- Quantitative Analysis

In this qualitative study, I was dependent on the experiences and stories shared by the teachers through face to face interviews. According to the recommendation of Lincoln and Guba (1985), I triangulated my data by performing walk-throughs of each

school to validate the data received from teacher interviews. I believe a mixed-methods or quantitative study could be helpful in confirming the data received from the teacher interviews. A quantitative instrumentation could validate the stories and the experiences shared by the teachers in this study.

A quantitative study would also allow for more data from a larger population of teachers. The extent of research by collecting data of teachers from more than three schools could provide more information on teachers' values and beliefs and the influence they have on school culture.

Conclusion

Teachers' values and beliefs are a key motivation to how teachers will act in the classroom, interact with students and their colleagues, and influence the culture of a school (Borg, 2015; Davis, 2018; Finley, 2016). However, teachers do not always act on their values and beliefs (Fives & Gill, 2015; Diehl and Golann 2023). In this study the theoretical frame work of servant leadership was used to understand teachers' values and beliefs and how those beliefs influenced the culture of a school. All thirteen private school teachers in this study stated that they valued the traits of servant leadership and attempted to act on those traits in the classroom. However, factors such as being overwhelmed with daily responsibilities, a lack of support from school leaders and colleagues, and not seeing their values being modeled by the leaders of their schools prevented these teachers from acting on their beliefs. Most of the teachers from the study did indicate that when teachers and school leaders acted on the traits of servant leadership a positive influence on the culture of their schools could be felt. Most teachers in this

study believed that servant leadership positively influenced the culture of their schools by creating a close community which helped teachers feel supported and appreciated. However, some teachers felt a negative impact of servant leadership. These teachers indicated that they sometimes felt like they were asked to lead to many extracurricular activities or perform duties outside their expertise as a means to serve the school. Overall, if teachers are allowed to act on their values and beliefs of servant leadership, a positive influence could be seen on the culture of a school which would allow teachers and students to feel supported.

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APPENDIX

Table 2.1

Open-Ended Interview Protocol

Questions
1. How would you define servant leadership?
2. How would you describe your personal beliefs of servant leadership?
3. How have you see servant leadership displayed in different areas of your school?
4. How has servant leadership impacted the culture of you school?
5. What do you believe is the role of servant leadership in you class room?
6. How do you believe servant leadership has impacted the students at your school?
7. What leads you to believe that the principal at your school is a servant leader?
8. How has the principal's servant leadership impacted those you work with?
9. How has the servant leadership of your principal impacted the culture of the school?
10. How has the principal's servant leadership impacted your leadership?
11. How has the principals' leadership been different from previous employers who are not servant leaders?
12. Has there been a negative impact of servant leadership in your school?
13. Has there been anything that has prevented you from employing the traits of servant leadership at your school?

Table 3.1 *Interview Participants Demographic*

Participant Name	*Gender*	*Subject taught*	*Years in Education*	*Years at Current School*
	Southeast Christian Academy			
Teacher 1	Female	History	18	18
Teacher 2	Female	Math and science	23	12
Teacher 3	Female	Math	18	5
Teacher 4	Male	Math	34	19
Teacher 5	Male	English	15	9
	Grace Christian School			
Teacher 6	Female	English	5	3
Teacher 7	Male	Math	17	17
Teacher 8	Male	Math and science	7	3
Teacher 9	Female	Special Education	20	13
Teacher 10	Male	Fine Arts	10	4
	St. James High School			
Teacher 11	Male	Religion	2	2
Teacher 12	Male	Theology	19	3
Teacher 13	Female	Personal Finance	3	2

Servant Leadership in Private K-12 Schools

A. The influence of leadership
B. The nature of the community
C. School culture and pedagogy

Variables Related to Servant Leadership			
A. Presence of administration	A. Lack of support	B. Professional comradery	C. Community Values
A. Undervalued teachers	B. Professional relationships	C. Acts of physical service	C. Pedagogy

Initial Codes Organized By Factor then School			
A1 Presence of Administration	A3 Lack of administrator presence	B3 relationship building	C2 Administration will do unwanted jobs
A1 SL being modeled	A3 Lack of support	B3 Relational disconnect	C2 Wrong motivations in community service
A1 Approachability of administration	A3 Perceived weakness	C1 Doing unwanted jobs	C2 Humility in Administration
A1 Women are disadvantaged	A3 Teachers feel empowered	C1 Community service	C2 Transparency
A1 Teachers are overworked	A3 Administrations lack of management	C1 Mission trips	C2 SL taught in extra-curricular activities
A1 Inability to change	B1 Relatability of administration	C1 Transparency	C2 Lack of the teaching of SL
A2 Presence of administration	B1 Relationship Building	C1 Teachers demonstrate SL	C2 Students misunderstanding of SL
A2 Administration is approachable	B1 Ability to trust administration	C1 Integrity of administration	C3 Respect
A2 Lack of teacher effort	B1 SL taught through relationships	C1 Consistency of administration	C3 Teaching of SL in religion class
A2 Teachers feel empowered	B1 Team oriented	C1 Agility	C3 SL is found in extra-curricular activities
A2 Frustration in the effort of coworkers	B2 Relationships	C1 Consistency of administration	C3 SL in ROTC program
A2 Teacher needs	B2 Team work	C1 SL taught in clubs	C3 Teaching humbly
A3 Administration meets physical needs	B3 Administrators care	C1 SL taught in class	

1. Grace Christian School 2. Southeast Christian School
3. St. Andrews School

VITA

I, Leighton Ray Upton, was born in Wilmington, NC where I spent the majority of my formative years. I earned my Bachelor of Arts degree in Religion for Bob Jones University and A Master of Arts Degree in Christian Education and Counseling from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. I currently reside in Savannah, GA where I am the Director of Campus Life at Savannah Christian Preparatory School.