The Phenomenological Study on the Impact of Servant Leadership for Establishing a Culture of High Performance as Perceived by High School Principals

Angela Lawyer

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The Phenomenological Study on the Impact of Servant Leadership for Establishing a Culture of High Performance as Perceived by High School Principals

A Dissertation by

Angela Lawyer

Brandman University
Irvine, California
School of Education

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership
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Committee in charge:

Doug DeVore, Ed.D., Dissertation Chair
Carol Anderson-Woo, Ed.D., Committee Member
Alan Enomoto, Ed.D., Committee Member
BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY

Chapman University System

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

The dissertation of Angela Lawyer is approved.

Douglas P. DeVore, Ed.D., Dissertation Chair

Carol Anderson-Woo, Ed.D., Committee Member

Carol Anderson-Woo, Ed.D., Committee Member

Alan Enomoto, Ed.D., Committee Member

Douglas P. DeVore, Ed.D., Associate Dean

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“For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing he deceives himself” (Galations 6:3). I must first give all honor and praise to God for sending me and accompanying me on this journey. Without him, I am nothing. I must honor my father Coy J. Foster (deceased) for his parenting, his discipline, his strength, and his love. He believed in me and supported my every endeavor. I honor and thank my mother Marie Jackson for being my lifelong cheerleader. She has always motivated me with three simple words, “Yes you can!” Mom has been there to support me, care for me, mentor me, pray with me, cry with me, and correct me in all of my spaces. For that I will always love you!

I am thankful and blessed to have both a loving and supportive husband, Gary Lawyer, who has always supported my dreams in every way. As a spouse who values and treasures education himself, he actively understands what it takes to get the work done. I love you for loving me into my possibilities.

There is always one teacher who impacts the life of a child the most. I was blessed to be educated, impacted, and influenced why Irene Anton Lee. She was my middle school math and science teacher who instilled faith in me and my ability. She helped me understand just how successful I could be in life and encouraged both me and my parents to pursue unchartered paths. She advocated for me, taught me, and cared for me in a manner that I will never forget. I will be eternally grateful to her.

The professional mentor that I was blessed to supported by was most definitely the best of the best for me and my journey. He is Rick B. Wallis. Colonel Wallis entered my life as the principal of the first military school where I served as a teacher. He was
structured in his approach, goal oriented, no-nonsense, but most importantly student-centered. It was under his tutelage that I learned the meaning of servant leadership. I learned the essence of collaboration, working toward a vision, and achieving results, unapologetically. He taught me, in his own way, everything that I needed to know to be a successful school leader anywhere. He has made an impact in a manner that he may never know. But I appreciate every lesson, ever opportunity, and every demerit. I grew from every incident in his presence.

I will be forever grateful for the support of faculty at Brandman University. Dr. DeVore served as my dissertation chair with such a supportive spirit from beginning to end. I would not have gotten through this without him. Dr. Woo served double duty as both my cohort mentor and dissertation committee member with love and ongoing support. Dr. Enomoto served as my instructor and as part of my dissertation committee and was consistently positive and encouraging. Dr. Rice has been a friend and an immeasurable support throughout. I appreciate you always.
ABSTRACT

Phenomenological Study on the Impact of Servant Leadership for Establishing a Culture of High Performance as Perceived by High School Principals

by Angela Lawyer

Purpose: The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore and describe the perceived impact of Patterson’s (2003) 7 servant leadership constructs on high school principals in establishing a culture of high performance.

Methodology: The qualitative phenomenological method was decided by 8 thematic researchers to study the high school principals’ perceived impact of the 7 servant leadership constructs developed by Patterson on establishing a culture of high performance. This method was selected to investigate the experiences, perceptions, and impact of the participants to help identify how the establishment of a culture of high performance in a high school setting is achieved. The population for this study was high school principals within Riverside County.

Findings: The qualitative data from the 8 high school principals participating in this study indicated a variety of findings. The data revealed 15 themes and 233 references across the 7 servant leadership constructs. There were 15 key findings and 15 major findings.

Conclusions: The study supported five conclusions drawn from the data findings that described the perceived impact of the 7 servant leadership constructs for establishing a culture of high performance for high school principals. Principals who established a culture of high performance must (a) allow for construct alignment, (b) empower staff
and stakeholders, (c) foster relationship building, (d) show genuine care for others, (e) create a spirit of service.

**Recommendations:** Further research is recommended on the 7 servant leadership constructs. The study should be replicated at high schools nationwide to gain national perspective. A comparative study should be conducted between high school principals and assistant principals who have adopted Patterson’s servant leadership constructs. A quantitative study would provide insight into use of servant leadership constructs and its correlation to high levels of student performance. A comparative qualitative study should be conducted to engage principals of high- and low-performing schools. Another thematic team should continue the study how servant leadership impacts a culture of high performance in schools with underrepresented populations.
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Following discussions and considerations regarding the opportunity to study Patterson’s (2003) servant leadership constructs, two faculty researchers and eight doctoral students discovered a common interest in exploring the ways K12 leaders perceive the impact these seven constructs (agapao love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service) have on establishing a culture of high achievement. This resulted in a thematic study conducted by a research team of eight doctoral students.

The eight peer researchers and two faculty advisors ultimately chose a phenomenological design that would be most appropriate for this study of the servant leadership constructs and their perceived impact on high school principals and how they establish a culture of high student achievement within their school sites. This structure was resolved to be generally suitable as the nonexperimental, descriptive approach to best accumulate the lived encounters of the leaders. Each researcher interviewed eight K12 leaders to describe how they perceived the impact these seven constructs of servant leadership by Patterson (2003) established a culture of high achievement at their organizations. To ensure thematic consistency, the team co-created the purpose statement, research questions, definitions, interview questions, and study procedures. It was agreed upon by the team that for increased validity, data collection would involve method triangulation using interviews, observations, and artifacts.

Throughout the study, the term peer researchers is used to refer to the other researchers who conducted this thematic study. These were Freddie Chavarria, Title I elementary/middle school principals; Lillian French, Latina superintendents working in Title I school districts; Angela Lawyer, middle school/high school principals; Darrick
Rice, middle school/high school principals; Antonio Sandifer, principals of Native American schools; Robin Stout, public school district superintendents; Rebecca Toto, human resource administrators; and Alison Wills, middle school principals.
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970) focuses on the responsibility of the leader, which encompasses not only the success of the organization, but also the responsibility to their followers and stakeholders. Servant leadership is demonstrated by acting in a responsible manner, putting others first, and showing sensitivity to others’ concerns. This philosophy speaks to leaders in public organizations, especially education. Servant leadership inspires leaders to balance the needs of followers with the desire to lead. It encourages them to treat others with respect, altruism, fairness, and honesty (Greenleaf, 1970). It requires a leader to build community and lead in an ethical manner.

The term servant leadership was coined and first proposed by Greenleaf (1970), and according to him, organizational leaders should be servants first. Servant leadership is a theoretical framework that suggests that a leader’s primary motivation and role is to serve others. It is a framework that can be put into action and operationalized. It is often implemented in public, nonprofit, and educational arenas that operate in stable environments. These environments historically attract leaders and followers who are particularly attracted to opportunities for personal growth and consensus building (B. N. Smith, Montagno, & Kuzmenko, 2004). These instances are the core of servant leadership. The central tenets of servant leadership as defined by Patterson (2003) are agapao love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service.

According to Greenleaf (1970),

The servant leader is servant first. . . . It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from the one who is leader first. (p. 3)
Servant leadership is often compared to other leadership theories but distinguished from other contemporary leadership styles as it prioritizes the development and growth of organizations’ members and emphasizes fulfilling the needs and ensuring the well-being of followers to achieve organizational goals (Kok-Yee, Soon, & Kim-Yin, 2008). Kok-Yee et al. (2008) further discussed just how servant leadership takes the focus off of organizational leaders and shifts the focus to the followers. The focus shifts from the business to the people. Such practices have facilitated the improved practice and attainment of organizational goals.

Inasmuch, servant leadership qualities that are operationalized by principals on high school campuses can have a tremendous impact on the staff, students, and culture of the environment. As a result, servant leadership qualities at work impact both academic and social outcomes for students. Herndon (2007) asserted that there is a correlation between servant leadership operationalized, school culture, and student achievement. The roles of the high school principal that exhibits servant leadership qualities can have a significant influence on the culture of the school in which the principal serves, an impact on the students’ academic outcomes, and a positive effect on staff longevity and tenure.

Background

The servant leader is a servant first (Greenleaf, 1970). The ideology of servant leadership inverts the norm; it places service as a priority. Instead of people working to serve the leader, the leader exists to serve the people. According to Greenleaf (1970), that person is very different from one who is a leader first. The leader first is one who usually needs to utilize their power to acquire material things or control. The leader first and the servant first are two extreme types, but the great leader is seen as servant first.
The term servant leadership was coined by Robert Greenleaf in 1970 in an essay he published titled *The Servant as Leader*. Greenleaf (1970) discussed the characteristics of servant leaders and how they make the needs of others a priority. Servant leaders focus more on the growth and well-being of the people and communities to which they belong. While traditional leadership usually involves the accumulation and exercise of power by the party holding the most power, servant leadership is different in that the servant leader shares power. The servant leader puts the needs of others first. The servant leader also helps people to develop and reach their highest potential.

According to Spears (1996), servant leadership is a new kind of leadership model, which puts serving others as a number one priority. Servant leadership emphasizes service to others. The central tenets of the servant leadership framework are service to others, holistic approach to work, promoting a sense of community, and sharing power in decision-making.

**Leadership and High Achievement**

Leadership has a multifaceted function and takes on myriad meanings. Leadership is defined as the process of influencing the activities of an organized group toward goal achievement (Rauch & Behling, 1984). Leadership can also be defined as interpersonal influence, exercised in a situation, and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal (Tannenbaum, Wechler, & Massarik, 2013).

Leadership models vary from organization to organization. Leadership models utilized within the education arena are specialized and tailored to such an environment. There are a few leadership models that are commonly used in education:
transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and servant leadership. Gunn (2002) stated that transformational leadership in schools is when a leader empowers members of the learning community to improve from within. Transformational leadership is a model that both teachers and principals can use to lead by example. It places great value on building community and relationships, which builds a nurturing community and, in turn, supports the enhancement of student achievement.

Transactional leadership is a bit different from transformational leadership. Transactional leadership focuses on the leader-follower relationship. It is commonly used in education in the relationship between instructors and students. Students are required to complete projects, assignment, or tests, and if they perform well, they will be awarded good marks or the ability to pass.

In the servant leadership model, a servant leader is servant first. Servant leadership manifests itself in the care taken by the servant first, to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test is, do those served grow as persons; do they while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And what of the least privileged in society: will they benefit, or at least, not be further deprived? (Greenleaf, 1970).

Various leadership models are considered by the person serving in the role of the high school principal. The role of the high school principal is intricate and encompasses many roles and responsibilities. The school principal is responsible for sharing a vision of academic success for all students. The principal must create a climate hospitable to learning. The principal should cultivate leadership in others. The principal must engage
in improving instruction. And the principal should manage people, data, and processes to foster school improvement (Wallace Foundation, 2013).

The school principal has a great influence on student learning. In fact, principals have most influenced student learning by fostering a strong learning climate (Allensworth, 2012). One method for principals to create strong learning environments is supporting teacher leadership around school-wide goals. According to Allensworth (2012), district data showed that teacher leadership was a critical mechanism through which principals established a strong school climate. In this model, teachers work together to find solutions. Teachers’ meeting time is used for a planned purpose, and principals support teacher teams.

Establishing a culture of high student achievement requires a strong school climate and empowered staff. According to a University of Chicago Consortium on School Research, “Schools with the highest learning gains had principals who promoted a strong school climate by empowering and collaborating with teachers and school staff around shared goals. Improvements in school climate lay the foundation for teacher and student success” (Kominiak, 2018, “Teacher leadership is key,” para. 2). Successful principals: (a) develop systems for supporting teachers to support students, (b) are skilled in organizing and supporting shared leadership among staff, and (c) manage shared leadership by guiding, coordinating, and monitoring the work of teachers and leaders in the school (Allensworth, 2012).

**Characteristics of Servant Leadership**

The notion of servant as leader, or servant leadership, is purposefully oxymoronic and arresting in nature (Greenleaf, 1970). Robert Greenleaf (1970) intentionally sought
out a descriptor that would give people pause for thought. Combining the two seemingly
contradictory terms, Greenleaf has asked that leaders take a second look at the very
nature of leadership and its meaning. He carefully considered the definitions of both
terms, servant and leadership, and combined them.

Servant leaders are described as selfless and motivated by the needs of others. This foundation is distinctive to servant leadership. According to B. N. Smith et al. (2004), “Typically, models of leadership do not begin with an analysis of leader
motivation, and Greenleaf’s concepts in this regard are unique” (p. 82). Servant
leadership emphasizes core personal characteristics and beliefs over any specific
leadership techniques. Behavioral theorists have identified the following 10 major
leadership characteristics in Greenleaf’s writings:

1. Listening – A critical communication tool, necessary for accurate
communication and for actively demonstrating respect for others.

2. Empathy – The ability to mentally project one’s own consciousness into that of
another individual.

3. Healing – The servant leader recognizes the shared human desire to find
wholeness in one’s self and supports it in others.

4. Awareness – It is needed in order to be aware of leadership opportunities.

5. Persuasion – The effective servant leader builds group consensus through
gentle but clear and persistent persuasion, and does not exert group compliance
through position power.

6. Conceptualization – The servant leader can conceive solutions to problems that
do not currently exist.
7. Foresight – It is better than an average guess about what will happen in the future.
8. Stewardship – Organizational stewards or trustees are concerned not only for the individual followers within the organization but its impact on the relationship with society.
9. Commitment to the growth of people – A demonstrated appreciation and encouragement of others.
10. Building community – Servant leaders demonstrate to the larger institutions the importance of community. (Russell & Stone, 2002, p. 146)

**Historical Perspective—Servant Leadership**

Robert Greenleaf, the author of servant leadership, was born in 1904 in Terre Haute, Indiana. He was raised in a household aligned with strong personal ethics and significant community involvement. His father was active in the areas of community and business affairs, serving on school boards and the city council. The roots of Greenleaf’s philosophy are strongly aligned with the average working person with a belief that leadership lives within all of us. His philosophy aligns with that of the working class. Yet the true leader is one who serves first (Greenleaf, 1970).

Robert Greenleaf demonstrated early aspirations for leadership in his role as president of his high school class government and his transition to AT&T (world’s largest company at the time) where he served for 38 years. He rose to become the company’s director of research management and education. In his position, he began identifying and training promising managers. He became renowned for living by the ideology that the best leaders are driven by team interests and share a set of ethical characteristics. During
early retirement, he founded the Center for Applied Ethics (renamed the Robert Greenleaf Center in 1964) which promotes the research and public understanding of leadership excellence.

Valeri (2007) defined servant leadership and examined it from an historical perspective. He indicated that it is an approach to leadership that has strong altruistic and ethical overtones that asks and requires leaders to be attentive to the needs of their followers and to empathize with them. Northouse (2004) indicated that servant leaders should take care of their followers by making sure that they become healthier, wiser, freer, and more autonomous, so that that they too can become servant leaders.

**Concepts of Servant Leadership**

Servant leadership is aligned with several concepts that affect academic outcomes for students in schools. Cerit (2009) addressed the effects of the servant leadership behaviors of school principals on teacher job satisfaction. He further asserted the connection of teacher job satisfaction with students’ enhanced academic performance. Hallinger and Heck (1999) discussed the fact that principals and teachers are the main determining factors of the quality of education.

The leadership behaviors of principals are the factors that affect job satisfaction for teachers. Servant leadership, specifically, is one leadership philosophy that has been identified as a pathway to improve the entire school environment (Wheaton, 1999). This further supports the correlation of positive school environment with heightened academic achievement.

Herndon (2007) asserted that there is a relationship between servant leadership, school culture, and student achievement. His research supports the theory that school
principal servant leadership has an influence on both school culture and student
achievement. It further indicates that school culture has an influence on student
achievement. Stewart (2017) supported the ideology that school principals can have a
significant impact within the educational setting and on its stakeholders by demonstrating
servant leadership qualities. He also asserted that many commercial environments
benefit from the implementation of servant leadership. It is very clear that schools can
become stronger when school leaders adopt, practice, and model servant leadership.

**Theoretical Foundations**

Servant leadership theory is easily distinguished from other contemporary
leadership styles, as it prioritizes the development and growth of the members of
organizations. Further, it emphasizes fulfilling the needs of and tending to the well-being
of followers to achieve organizational goals (Kok-Yee, 2008). Kok-Yee (2008)
discussed just how servant leadership takes the focus off of organizational leaders and
shifts the focus to the followers. Such practices have facilitated the improved practice
and attainment of organizational goals.

Servant leadership is often compared to transformational leadership. While both
theories share the charismatic leadership model’s focus on leadership qualities and
behavior, they are not equivalents. B. N. Smith et al. (2004) stated that “the learner’s
motivation for behaving is a critical distinction between the two theories” (p. 85). The
transformational leader is motivated by the desire to achieve organizational goals while
the servant leader is motivated by the need to support the self-actualization of followers.
Servant leadership is demonstrated by empowering and developing people. Servant
leadership involves expressing humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, and stewardship by providing direction (van Dierendonck, 2011).

Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) presented the most notable contribution to the discussion on the philosophical foundations of servant leadership. They asserted that Judeo Christian and biblical teaching are foundational to servant leadership as an ontology and directly inform the act of servant leadership. Sendjaya and Sarros further contended that the spiritual foundation that grounds servant leadership has been the greatest cause of confusion regarding its acceptance and application in Western culture. Western thinking is moving away from biblical paradigms. Yet there is a biblical precedent for servant leadership.

**Theoretical Framework**

Based on Robert Greenleaf’s theory on servant leadership, Patterson (2003) engaged more involved research and determined that servant leadership is a virtuous theory. Patterson, through her work, explained the characteristics of this leadership style and asserted that the constructs place particular focus on the virtue and, thereby, the character of the individual. A virtue is described as a qualitative characteristic that is part of one’s character. It is something that is within a person that is internal (Patterson, 2003). The constructs of servant leadership are agapao love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service. Patterson (2003) asserted that servant leadership encompasses these seven virtuous constructs. These constructs are fundamental to the foundations of servant leadership theory and are illuminated in its context. The presence of these virtuous constructs is what focuses the efforts of the servant leader.
Agapao Love

Agapao love is a Greek term that implies a moral or respectful consideration and treatment of others. Winston (2002) defined agapao love, “in a social or moral sense, embracing the judgment and the deliberate assent of the will as a matter of principle, duty, and propriety” (p. 5). It involves considering others with a sense of value and humanness that is at the forefront of the servant leader.

Humility

Humility is a peculiar virtue (Bagger, 2002), suggesting that if a person is truly humble, then that person cannot esteem or think so highly of him or herself. Humility is the ability to keep one’s accomplishments and talents in perspective (Sandage & Wiens, 2001). Humility counteracts self-interest (Fairholm & Fairholm, 2000).

Altruism

Altruism is when leaders have concern for the welfare of others and go to great lengths to care for and improve the welfare of others even when it involves personal sacrifice (Patterson, 2003). Patterson (2003) asserted that altruism is at one polar end of a continuum and narcissistic self-interest is at the other. Altruism in leaders shifts the focus from the benefit of the organization to the benefit of the followers.

Vision

Vision refers to the leader’s vision of the role of the follower in the organization. Vision involves the leader seeking to find what the follower would like to do in the organization. In Patterson’s (2003) model of servant leadership, this variable of vision is worked out by the leader finding the various interests and goals of the employee as they
relate to what the follower wants to do, and the leader then modifies the organization’s procedures and methods to fit.

**Trust**

According to Winston (2002), trust is an integral element of servant leadership in which the leader believes in the follower’s ability to accomplish goals and enables the leader’s vision of and for the follower to occur. Trust works with the vision variable and is why Patterson’s (2003) model shows trust occurring at the same time as vision. This helps present the process of how the leader engages with the follower to establish the vision with the follower and to establish or place trust in the follower with regard to organizational elements.

**Empowerment**

Empowerment is a core factor in servant leadership and should be the focus of the servant leader (Russell & Stone, 2002). Empowerment also involves a clarification of goals, responsibilities, and expectations. The new follower should be empowered in small amounts. The shift in small increments allows the follower to be able to handle larger levels of empowerment as they arise.

**Service**

Service is at the hallmark of servant leaders (Farling, Stone, & Winston, 1999). It is obvious that a servant leader should serve, but the servant leader focuses on service to others. Servant leaders serve out of a sense of servitude or requirement. The servant leader thinks of service in the process of thinking about leading and sees his role to the follower as one of providing the follower what is needed to accomplish his or her tasks.
In the field of servant leadership, the outcomes of followers are associated with the dedicated service and focus of the leader (Greenleaf, 1977). Where servant leadership practice abounds, there is a relationship between the servant leadership characteristics of school principals and student achievement (Crabtree, 2014). The investigation into that space forms the foundation of this research.

**Problem Statement**

This study sought to explore high school principals’ perceptions of the impact of student leadership on establishing a culture of high achievement. This is an important research problem to address for several reasons. First, the literature indicates that the employ of servant leadership characteristics by school principals yields a positive effect on school culture (Herndon, 2007). The literature further indicates that the use of servant leadership constructs by school leaders has a positive effect on teacher satisfaction and tenure. The lived experiences of school principals employing servant leadership constructs and the effects on students and student achievement is absent from the literature. However rich descriptions of these experiences may add insight into the effects of such constructs on students’ academic outcomes. Secondly, hearing from school principals in their own words about their lived experiences while employing servant leadership characteristics in schools may inform future practice of school administrators (Tanno, 2017). The remainder of this section focuses on the gaps in qualitative research in this area and explains the research problem in greater detail.

The researcher discovered a lack of literature about the seven constructs of Patterson’s (2003) servant leadership and their impact on developing a culture for high student achievement. In fact, servant leadership has been slow to attract the attention of
academic researchers until recently (Liden, Wayne, Chenwei, & Meuser, 2014). There is also a dearth of qualitative investigation of experiences of school principals employing servant leadership constructs and its effects on the culture of high student achievement. Extending qualitative research to gain insight into principals’ lived experiences when employing servant leadership constructs may shed light on best practices from the school administrator’s context.

The role of qualitative investigation found in the literature regarding servant leadership may have implications for the quality of education, student achievement, and school culture (Herndon, 2007). Investigation into high school principals’ lived experiences may shed light on the effects of the employ of servant leadership constructs in a manner in which quantitative investigation cannot.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore and describe high school principals’ perceived impact of the seven servant leadership constructs developed by Patterson (2003) for establishing a culture of high performance.

**Research Questions**

**Central Question**

What is the impact of Patterson’s (2003) seven servant leadership constructs on establishing a culture of high performance as perceived by high school principals?

**Subquestions**

1. What is the impact of the agapao leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?
2. What is the impact of the humility leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?

3. What is the impact of the altruism leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?

4. What is the impact of the vision leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?

5. What is the impact of the trust leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?

6. What is the impact of the empowerment leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?

7. What is the impact of the service leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?

**Significance of the Study**

The leadership role of the high school principal is significant to the success and culture of the students at the school. The high school principal is responsible for supervising and facilitating the daily operations of the school. Their duties include collaboration with district-level officials to establish and implement academic goals and curriculum, establishing school culture and building relationships that promote student success rests with the school site principal. The Wallace Foundation (2013) supports and asserts that the principal’s primary roles are the following:

1. They shape a vision of academic success for all students;

2. They create a climate hospitable to education;

3. They cultivate leadership in others;
4. They improve instruction;

5. They manage people, data and processes with the goal of student improvement.

There is a direct correlation between school leadership and the school’s culture of academic achievement. The educational leader at the school site has great influence over the culture, tone, and accountability measures at the school site. According to Adams (2013), nurturing the school culture was the key to improving education and principal leadership was the primary influence in creating positive, caring, and intellectually stimulating schools that improved academic performance. One way to stay laser focused on continuous improvement is to utilize data as a primary tool. Shafer (2018) stated that with foresight, intentional action, and reflection, principals can shape the shared values of their school. The ability to focus on the people before the organization is an example of servant leadership. Herndon (2007) asserted that a principal’s servant leadership has an influence on school culture and student achievement.

Servant leaders are servants first (Greenleaf, 1977). Likewise, school principals who employ servant leadership characteristics prioritize the development and growth of the members of organizations. Further, such leadership emphasizes fulfilling the needs of and tending to the well-being of followers to achieve organizational goals (Kok-Yee et al., 2019). Servant leadership takes the focus off of organizational leaders and shifts the focus to the followers and those who are served by the organization. Such practices have facilitated the improved practice and attainment of organizational goals in schools as well as other organizations. Servant leaders lead with virtuous constructs (Patterson, 2003), which include trust and humility. Servant leadership employed by school principals promotes trust among teachers and staff. A climate of trust promotes focus on the
school’s vision and enhances student achievement (Joseph & Winston, 2005). Therefore, in order to build a culture of high student achievement on a high school campus, one must look closely at the leadership style of the school principal. Does the principal operationalize the constructs of servant leadership?

There is a significant breadth of research about educational leadership strategies and student achievement as well as a presence of research about the role of the school principal. However, there is not a wealth of research on the role of the high school principal as a servant leader and the impact of such leadership on creating a culture of high levels of academic achievement. Further research in the area of servant leadership constructs will provide high school principals with enhanced tools and best practices and equip them to create, shift, and maintain the necessary momentum to obtain and maintain enhanced student outcomes. This study will also benefit the support staff, both classified and certificated, working with high school principals as they develop professionally and provide coaching to their staff about the impact of servant leadership on teachers. It is hopeful that this study will also benefit the most important stakeholders served within the educational arena, the students.

Definitions

The following theoretical and operational terminology pertains to the study. Such terms are defined in order to provide clarity of researcher meaning to the reader. Theoretical definitions are sometimes known as the conceptual definition and convey the meaning researchers attach to the concept and provide meaning to the reader in relation to ideas and concepts developed out of research conducted in the past. The
operational definition is how the researcher decides to measure the variables in the study.

Theoretical Definitions

**Agapao love.** Agapao love in Greek terms is moral love meaning to do the right thing for the right reasons. Agapao love leaders care more for their followers than for the interests of the organization resulting in greater understanding, gratitude, kindness, forgiveness, and compassion (Gunn, 2002; Patterson, 2003; Winston, 2002)

**Altruism.** Altruism is demonstrating unselfish concern for the welfare of another, even with a risk or sacrifice against one’s personal self-interest. It involves deriving personal pleasure from helping and seeking what’s best for others, often with an attitude of humility, modesty, and selflessness (DeYoung, 2000; Kaplan, 2000; Monroe, 1994; Patterson, 2003).

**Empowerment.** Empowerment is entrusting power to others. Virtually giving away power to followers and allowing them to know and feel significant and important in their role.

**Humility.** Humility is the importance of being humble and having modesty, not being mistaken for meekness or the absence of strength. It is a virtue characterized by one’s own talents and abilities and an outward rejection of self-interest while placing true value on the recognition and success of others (Den Hartog et al., 1999).

**Trust.** Trust is the level of confidence that one individual has in another’s competence and that individual’s willingness to act in a fair, ethical, and predictable manner. Trust is essential to organizational culture; integrity and care for others are valued by the leader and followers.
**Service.** Service is a virtue, according to Arjoon (2000) when one is doing something deliberately with a desire to perform as human beings ought, that is, in the proper way. Service is the primary function of a type of leadership that is not based on one’s own interests but rather on the interests of others (Farling et al., 1999).

**Vision.** A bridge from the present to the future created by a collaborative mindset, adding meaning to the organization, sustaining higher levels of motivation and withstanding challenge (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Landsberg, 2003; Méndez-Morse, 1993; Nanus, 1992).

**Operational Definitions**

**High school.** A school that provides comprehensive academic instruction to students in Grades 9 through 12.

**Principal.** For this study, the principal is defined as the organizational and instructional leader of a public-school organization.

**Culture of high performance.** School has demonstrated a growth trend over past 2 years as indicated by the California School Dashboard (n.d.) within the state and local indicators such assessment data and attendance.

**Delimitations**

The target population for this study included high school principals who represented at least four of the following five criteria:

1. The principal has been employed at a current high school within Riverside County with a minimum of 50 staff members.

2. The principal participant possesses a minimum of 2 or 3 years of experience at their current site.
3. The principal has a minimum of 5 years of experience in the K-12 profession.
4. The principal possesses membership in professional associations in their field, such as ACSA.
5. The principal has authored articles, paper, or materials written, published, or presented at conferences or association meetings.

**Organization of the Study**

The study was organized into five chapters, references, and appendices. Chapter I is the introduction. Chapter II contains a review of literature on servant leadership among school leaders and high student performance. Chapter III describes and defines the methodology and research design of the study. Chapter III further describes the population, sample, and data gathering tools. Chapter IV describes the research, data collection, and findings. Chapter V provides a synthesis and summary of the research findings, conclusions, and recommendations that resulted. Chapter V also addresses future action and further research recommended.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter II provides a thorough review of the literature associated with the servant leadership constructs. The constructs that provide the foundation to this study are agapao love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service (Patterson, 2003). A synthesis matrix was constructed (see Appendix A) and used to guide and support the evolution of this review of the literature. The synthesis matrix was used by the researcher to organize sources and study variables presented in the literature. It facilitated the researcher’s ability to view the literature in an organized format, sort sources by topic, generate relationships between the sources, and draw conclusions about the relationship between the entries within the matrix. The matrix was created and used by the researcher to organize the references, themes, and constructs presented in the study.

The review of literature is organized into three sections and further divided into subsections using funneling (Ridley, 2012). The review starts with the historical perspective of servant leadership and then explores the three main sections. The first section is an overview of the theoretical foundations of leadership. It explores various leadership styles and theories. It examines the various approaches to leadership and how they can have impact on student performance. The second section focuses on the theoretical framework. It closely examines the seven servant leadership constructs and how these leadership characteristics influence school leaders. The third section synthesizes leadership in K-12 schools. Further, it describes the attributes of high performance, the effects of collective efficacy, professional learning communities (PLCs), and student performance in schools led by those with servant leadership qualities.
Historical Perspective of Servant Leadership

Servant leadership is a classic concept. However, the term *servant leadership* was coined by Robert Greenleaf in 1970 in the essay *The Servant as Leader*. Greenleaf (1970) discussed the characteristics of servant leaders and how they make the needs of others a priority. Greenleaf’s initial servant leaders focus more on the growth and well-being of the people and communities to which they belong. Although traditional leadership usually involves the accumulation and exercise of power by the party holding the most power, servant leadership is different in that the servant leader shares power. The servant leader also puts the needs of others first. The servant leader also helps people to develop and reach their highest potential (Greenleaf, 1970).

According to Greenleaf (1970), the servant leader is a servant first. The ideology begins with the natural feeling that a person wants to serve and to serve first. Then there is a conscious choice and transition that brings that person to aspire to lead. According to Greenleaf, that person is very different from one who is a leader first. The leader first is one who usually needs to utilize their power to acquire material things or control. The leader first and the servant first are two extreme types. But the great leader is seen as a servant first.

Servant leadership has a philosophical basis of theory. Servant leaders are characterized in a unique manner. The motivation of the servant leader is to serve first, not to lead (Greenleaf, 1977). Rachmawati and Lantu (2014) pointed out that leaders always come to activate their power, manage something, and direct others. Instead, Greenleaf (1977) asserted that servant leaders serve out of prompting of conscience or in conformity with normative expectations. According to Rachmawati and Lantu (2014),
servant leaders have a self-concept in which they view themselves as stewards, which is derived from Greek “aikonomía,” meaning “house of manager.”

Theoretical Foundations

A leader is an individual who will likely use various different processes and mechanisms to achieve organizational goals, group goals, and personal goals. Reiter-Palmon and Illes (2003) pointed out that leaders must understand the cognitive requirements of creative problem solving. Effective leaders often make use of multiple leadership tools at any given time in order to be effective for the group that they are working with. Recognizing that there is more than one way to lead and that there are several approaches available that can all lead to the success of the greater good, the organization, and the individual, is often the key to success (S. Wilson, 2017). Leadership theories that can produce positive results are commonly used. These leadership theories: transactional leadership, behavioral leadership, transformational leadership, and servant leadership are discussed in the following sections.

Leadership Theory

It is said that great leaders are born, not made. The saying is true to this degree, that no man can persuade people to do what he wants them to do, unless he genuinely likes people, and believes that what he wants them to do is to their own advantage. (Barton, n.d., para. 1)

This discussion about leadership theory rejects that myth. Leadership is defined as “the action of leading a group of people or an organization” (“Leadership,” n.d., para. 1). According to Crowley (2011), it is the art of motivating a group of people to act toward achieving a common goal. The approach to the study of leadership usually has
been and perhaps always must be through the study of traits. Leadership obviously is not a simple trait but rather a complex of main traits fashioned together as a unit. An adequate appraisal of leadership would reduce this complex to its individual units, and any study of leadership to be of value should produce a list of traits that go together to make the leader. In the work setting, it can be directing employees and team members with a strategy to meet organizational goals. Every organization, business, group, government entity embraces a leadership style and executes accordingly (Crowley, 2011).

The general presumption is that every organization needs effective leadership to be effective and efficient. In defining leadership, Blanchard, Zigarmi, and Nelson (1993) stated that there are four fundamental leadership styles: direct, coach, support, and delegate. The first style, the direct leader, is an autocratic leader. Chukwusa (2018) defined an autocratic leader as one who maintains total control and treats team members as listeners and followers. He further explained that autocratic leaders determine the goals and policies. An autocratic leader is less interested in people and more interested in subject matter. An autocratic leader disregards the input of others and makes all the decisions. These leaders normally talk too much and focus all of the attention on themselves.

In comparison, according to Rapp, Gilson, Mathieu, and Ruddy (2016), the coach is the team leader. This type of leader shares control with team members; therefore, they share leadership responsibility. This type of leader believes in the ability and skills of others and creates a sense of security and belonging. This person ensures that all are offered an opportunity at leadership opportunities, ensures that the group will be successful in the leader’s absence, and promotes healthy communication among team
members. This leader recognizes the value of every team member and always involves others in skill development. Coaches’ behaviors will be positively related to team empowerment (Rapp et al., 2016).

The third style, the support style, is offered by the noninterventionist leader (Whitehead, 2016). This leader exercises minimal control over team members and allows team members to take the lead. The noninterventionist leader does not prepare for meetings and is less scripted in their approach. They are less focused and as a result do not accomplish much. This leader lacks courage in making plans.

Finally, the delegate is the authoritative leader, according to Whitehead (2016). This leader maintains firm control over the group but will allow members to participate in discussions. He or she comes with a purpose and a plan but does allow modification. The authoritative leader is active, engaged, and energetic and seeks the involvement of others. This leader is prepared to give necessary direction and support. This leader is an effective communicator and uses power to empower others. This leader prepares effectively, asks questions, and engages members of the team to respond.

**Transactional Leadership**

The transactional leadership is a style of leadership that focuses on results (Bass, 1990). It depends on the existing structure of the organization and measures success against the system of rewards and penalties. Transactional leadership was described by House and Shamir (1993) as one in which leader–follower associations were grounded upon a series of agreements between followers and leaders. According to Khan (2016), the transactional theory is “based on reciprocity where leaders not only influence followers but are under their influence as well” (p. 3). Khan suggested that transactional
leadership shows a discrepancy with regard to the level of the leader’s action and the nature of the relationship with the followers.

Bass and Avolio (1994) described transactional leadership “as a type of contingent-reward leadership that had active and positive exchange between leaders and followers whereby followers were rewarded or recognized for accomplishing agreed upon objectives” (p. 12). Transactional leaders have distinguished and formal authority and hold high-ranking positions of responsibility within an organization (Dumdum, Lowe, & Avolio, 2013). This leader is responsible for managing, monitoring, and maintaining routine by managing individual performance. Transactional leaders are also responsible for and facilitate group performance (Dumdum et al., 2013).

Moreover, transactional leaders set the criteria for their workers according to previously defined requirements (Birasnav, 2014). Performance reviews are the most common way to judge employee performance. Transactional or managerial leaders work best with employees who know their jobs and are rational. Birasnav (2014) described this leadership style as the exercise of control on the basis of knowledge.

Transactional leadership theory is contingent upon leaders giving employees something they want in exchange for getting something done (Kuhert & Lewis, 1987). Kuhert and Lewis’s (1987) leadership theory posits that workers are not self-motivated and require lines, structure, instruction, and monitoring in order to complete tasks efficiently and timely.

During the 1980s and 1990s, researchers Bass (1990) and Avolio (Avolio & Locke, 2002; Bass & Avolio, 1993, 1994) defined the dimensions and characteristics of transactional leadership:
Contingent reward is the process of setting expectations and rewarding workers for meeting them.

Passive management is where a leader does not interfere with workflow unless an issue arises.

Active management by exception is where managers, anticipate problems, monitor progress, and issue corrective actions.

**Behavioral Leadership**

Behavioral leadership is a form of leadership that focuses on the behavior of the leader (Goff, 2003). It is different from the trait approach (Fleenor, 2006), which focuses on the personality characteristics of the leader and the skills approach (Wright & Taylor, 1985), which emphasizes the leader’s capabilities. According to Wright and Taylor (1985), behavioral leadership focuses exclusively on what leaders do and how they act. Fiedler and House (1994) identified two additional leadership styles focusing on effectiveness of the leadership. These researchers opined that consideration (concern for people and relationship behaviors) and commencing structure (concern for production and task behaviors) were vital variables (Fiedler & House, 1994).

Research on trait and behavioral theories of leadership revealed that there are two kinds of behaviors: task behaviors and relationship behaviors (Derue, Nahrgang, Wellman, & Humphrey, 2011). Task behaviors support accomplishing goals and achieving objectives. Relationship behaviors help followers to feel comfortable with themselves, each other, and with the situation in which they find themselves. According to Derue et al. (2011), behavioral leadership is about how leaders combine these two kinds of behaviors to influence followers in an effort to achieve set goals.
As explained by Blake and Mouton (1964), behavioral leadership investigates five different types of leadership. These leadership styles are country club style, impoverished style, middle-of-the-road style, produce or perish style, and team style (Blake & Mouton, 1964). These various leadership styles all engage a different approach to leadership and aim at slightly different outcomes.

First, country club style leadership is a style in which the leader has a high level of concern for people and high level of involvement of people but a low concern for the task (Blake & Mouton, 1964). There is usually a very friendly relationship between the leader and the followers. While this style creates a scenario where leaders appear to care about their people, this style is often not good for driving results. People involved feel good and happy, but tasks are often not prioritized. The irony that results is that group members are happy but suffer because they fail to achieve set goals. This leadership approach is common among leaders who are afraid of upsetting people and fear rejection or being disliked by others (Blake & Mouton, 1964).

Second, Blake and Mouton (1964) described the impoverished style of leadership as one where the leader has low concern for people and low concern for the task at hand. This leadership style is usually embraced by those who care mostly about themselves yet are afraid to make mistakes. According to Blake and Mouton, this is the least effective approach to leadership.

Third, the middle-of-the-road style requires ineffectual compromise (Blake & Mouton, 1964). There is some level of concern for the task and some concern for people but not enough of either. Leaders who use this style try to address the needs of the task and their followers to some extent but do so with no conviction, skill, or insight.
Therefore, the effectiveness of this style is reduced. This style does not require much natural authority and decisiveness and as a result has much room for improvement (Blake & Mouton, 1964).

Fourth, the produce-or-perish style of leadership places a high level of focus on the task with no concern for people (Blake & Mouton, 1964). This style is also known as autocratic leadership. Leaders using this style seek to control and dominate others. These leaders often adopt the perspective that staff should be grateful to be employed and get paid a salary. Followers are often motivated through the threat of punishment. This is a dictatorial style of leadership. It can be effective when used short term in crisis situations. But this approach is not a sustainable approach, especially when followers have the option to walk away (Blake & Mouton, 1964).

Finally, the team style of leadership combines a high level of concern and involvement with a strong, well-organized focus on achieving a task. Blake and Mouton (1964) viewed this as an ideal behavioral approach. These types of leaders blend concern for people and organizational goals by using a collaborative approach to teamwork and consultation. This approach enables shared motivation to achieve shared organizational goals. This style requires that the followers are suitably mature and skilled for high levels of involvement. However Blake and Mouton suggested that it is not a good style to deploy when leading inexperienced people to produce critical results in a new area. Figure 1 is Blake and Mouton’s (1964) managerial grid, which shows the styles of leadership.
Transformational Leadership

What is transformational leadership? Burns (1978) defined it as a leadership approach that causes change in individuals and social systems. In its ideal form, transformational leadership creates valuable and positive change in those who are categorized as followers, with the end goal of making leaders out of these individuals (Burns, 1978). The manner in which this happens is that this style of leadership enhances motivation, morale, and the performance of followers through a multifaceted approach. A transformational leader does not lead in isolation, but instead connects with others’ sense of identity and self along with the identity of the organization (Burns, 1978). Burns further stated that a transformational leader serves as a role model and inspires his followers, challenges them to take ownership of their work, and understands both their strengths and weaknesses.

Figure 1. Managerial grid. From Managerial Grid: The Key to Leadership Excellence, by R. Blake and J. Mouton, 1964 (Houston, TX: Gulf).
Bass and Avolio (1993) maintained that there are four key characteristics of transformational leaders. These leaders have idealized influence where followers emulate their behavior and they serve as role models. They provide inspirational motivation by behaving in ways that are inspirational and provide meaning and a sense of challenge to their work. These leaders provide intellectual stimulation by addressing organizational problems and stimulate and support them by providing innovative solutions. And finally, they offer individualized consideration by providing individualized attention to each follower’s professional development by acting as a mentor (Bass & Avolio, 1993).

According to Choi, Goh, Adam, and Tan (2016), transformational leaders have the ability to generate energy, excitement, and passion toward a strong vision. They incorporate a charismatic persona with a clearly articulated vision to inspire the change they want to see in their organizations and in the future. They model and lead by example and ensure that their actions are ethical and empowering to others. Their strong communication skills provide them the platform to convey purpose, values, and enthusiasm with such precision to their employees and/or followers that a trusting relationship is firmly established. Choi et al. asserted that a charismatic leader has the ability to create compelling morally based personal relationships that inspire and empower others in the interest a distinguished purpose. Employees often need this type of inspirational leadership to perform to the best of their abilities and achieve a high standard of excellence. In addition, transformational leaders see the value in recognizing the achievements of their employees. Caldwell et al. (2012) urged leaders to treat people fairly, give them credit for their work, and support them to help them to achieve
organizational greatness. They stated that it is through this inspiration and motivation of individuals and the united team that organizations can successfully move forward toward a common vision.

Furthermore, transformational leaders guide and inspire their organization toward a purposeful vision and strategic plan. In addition, they fundamentally believe and act upon the principle that “top down” leadership does not have lasting impact on the success of an organization (Kezar, 2012). They understand that having an isolated team develop the strategic plan to then be passed down throughout the organization limits the success of the plan and the long-term success of the entire organization (Kezar, 2012). Instead, Aurik, Fabel, and Jonk (2015) asserted that these leaders enlist the talents of the organization to construct the strategy and gather essential feedback continually throughout the process. The strategic plan becomes a living document for all employees to formulate ideas, share insights, and find answers. Over time, this ongoing engagement process becomes the foundational belief of the organization, thereby broadening participation and shared responsibility for the organization’s continual growth and development (Aurik et al., 2015).

**Servant Leadership**

The idea of servant leadership is a very old one, yet Robert Greenleaf (1970) is the person who articulated it for modern times. He coined the term servant leadership in his essay *The Servant as Leader* in 1970. The term servant leadership is oxymoronic in nature. Servant leadership is a philosophy and set of practices that enrich the lives of individuals. It ultimately builds better organizations and creates a more caring world to live in (Greenleaf, 1970).
According to Greenleaf (1998), “The servant leader is the servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead” (p. 123). This type of leader is very different from one who is leader first, because of the need to assert unusual power or acquire material possessions. The leader first and servant first are two extreme types. Between these two ends of the spectrum lie blends these types that represent an infinite variety of human nature.

The servant leader differentiates himself from other leaders by taking care to manifest the servant-first persona to make sure that other people’s highest priorities are being served (C. Smith, 2005). C. Smith (2005) also stated that servant leaders focus on the growth and well-being of people and the communities they belong to. Traditional leadership focuses on exercised power by the individual at the top of the pyramid, but servant leadership focuses on sharing power and putting the needs of others first. Servant leadership fosters the development and performance of others within an organization (C. Smith, 2005).

Furthermore, the servant leadership framework comprises four central tenets, as outlined by Sousa and van Dierendonck (2010). These tenets are as follows: (a) service to others, (b) holistic approach to work, (c) promoting a sense of community, and (d) sharing of power in decision making (Sousa & van Dierendonck, 2010). They are discussed in the following sections.

Service to others. Servant leadership begins when a leader assumes the position of servant in the interaction with followers within the organization. Authentic leadership arises from the desire to first help others. Greenleaf (1970) wrote that this “simple fact is
the key to greatness” (p. 2). The primary motivation and purpose of a servant leader is to encourage and provoke greatness in others. The success of the organization is an indirect goal, but it is derived and usually a result of servant leadership.

Holistic approach to work. According to Greenleaf, ”The work exists for the person as much as the person exists for the work” (Spears, 1996, p. 8). This approach forces organizations to rethink and focus on relationships that exist between people, organizations, and society. This approach promotes the idea that individuals should be who they are in both their personal and professional lives. Valuing individuals ultimately benefits the long-term interest of organizations.

Promoting a sense of community. Greenleaf (1970) was saddened by the loss of community in modern society. Servant leadership questions the institution's ability to provide human services and argues that only communities (groups of individuals that are jointly liable for each other) can perform this function. Only after establishing a strong sense of community can the organization succeed at achieving its set objectives. Greenleaf stated that this sense of community can only arise from the actions of individual servant leaders.

Sharing of power in decision-making. According to Bass (1990), evidence of effective servant leadership is demonstrated through the cultivation of servant leadership in others. The servant leader creates a more effective work environment by being nurturing, participatory, empowering, and encouraging to their followers. The organizational structure that results from the implementation of servant leadership is referred to as the inverted pyramid (with employees at the top and leaders on the bottom).
Power sharing is a process of involving other followers in planning and decision-making (Bass, 1990).

**Theoretical Framework**

Patterson (2003) published her research on the seven virtuous constructs for servant leadership: agapao love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service. These constructs are considered virtues and become the focus within the servant leadership context. Patterson’s constructs solidify servant leadership and make it a more viable theory. Prior to the revelation of the constructs of servant leadership, such measures had been more of a discussion than a reality (Farling et al., 1999). Several authors have suggested that transformational leadership theory has limitations. However, there has been an overreliance on transformational theory. Kuhn (1970) showed that transformational leadership theory does not explain certain phenomena such as altruism or humility. This gap in leadership theory led to the need for additional theory. Servant leadership offers a viable perspective to the organizational leadership literature base.

Figure 2 illustrates Patterson’s (2003) seven constructs of servant leadership.

*Figure 2. Patterson’s servant leadership constructs. From “Servant Leadership: A Theoretical Model,” by K. A. Patterson, 2003, Dissertation Abstracts International. 64(2), 3082719.*
Agapao Love

The first of the seven virtuous constructs is agapao love. According to Greenleaf (2002), love is an indefinable term, and its manifestations are both subtle and infinite. Agapao love is known as love in leadership. Leaders who demonstrate love maintain a foundation of character and integrity. Such leaders build relationships built on trust. Trust can be defined as a willingness to accept the judgement and decision of another person (Greenleaf, 2002).

Leaders who exhibit agapao love in their role should naturally experience the growth of those served by them. According to van Dierendonck and Patterson (2010), the best test, and the most difficult to administer, is to ask the following: Do those served grow as persons? Do those served, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? Those who are served by a loving leader will experience personal growth and all around betterment. A servant leader exhibits compassionate love, which is a suitable antecedent for effective leadership like servant leadership, and it centers on the good of the other (Brouns, Externbrink, & Aledo, 2020).

According to Smylie, Murphy, and Seashore Louis (2016), caring needs to be an essential piece of the school principal’s mission in order to create a climate of compassionate love. Smylie et al. stated that improved care provided to others can enhance the care of all involved and result in overall improved student performance. It also leads to improved social and academic outcomes for students. Such actions also lead to the adoption of positive virtues such as respect, empathy, and compassion.
Altruism

Altruistic leadership is defined as the guiding of others with the goal of improving their well-being or emotional state (Goldman-Schuyler, n.d.). In some situations, altruism means selflessness, unselfishness. In practice, it means caring about the happiness of other people. An altruistic leader cares about the outcomes of the people who compose the organization just as much or more than the outcomes of the organization.

A servant leader in education displays altruism by creating staff and students who are not only competent and academically engaged but also foster loving and caring relationships (Warin, 2017). All successful educators understand that no significant learning occurs without a significant relationship (Comer, 2009). Sagnak and Kuruoz (2017) believed, “A significant positive relationship was found between altruistic behavior and meaningfulness. It has been determined that meaningfulness fully mediated the relationship between authentic leadership and altruistic behavior” (p. Abstract). Altruistic leaders are motivated and inspired by the meaningfulness of the work at hand.

One of the principles of altruism is being a leader who operates and focuses on increasing teacher effectiveness. Altruistic leaders have been recognized by scholars (Avolio & Locke, 2002) and are characterized as sensitive, empathetic, and good listeners. An altruistic leader will model necessary behaviors and engagement. By embracing altruism, principals can encourage teachers to be vulnerable and show that they have the dedication to make purposive change in the lives of their students. Such leaders can also teach by modeling how effective educators can capture the attention of, engage, and build relationships with the students served. The results are most always
positive outcomes for students both socially, cognitively, and academically (Avolio & Locke, 2002).

**Empowerment**

Empowering leadership refers to the process of sharing power, and allocating more autonomy and responsibilities to followers through a specific set of leader behaviors. According to Cheong, Spain, Yammarino, and Yun (2016), it entails enhancing the meaningfulness of work, fostering participation in decision-making, and expressing confidence in others. This form of leadership builds confidence in the capacity of individuals to execute the collective goals of the organization.

According to Balyer, Özcan, and Yildiz (2017), empowerment in the school setting is related to promoting actual change made within the professional setting. Empowerment promotes autonomy and decision-making among educational professionals. It also involves participating in decision-making processes regarding goal setting in the school environment. Empowerment also asserts that an educator who is empowered by the servant leader has both the knowledge and skills to act, serve, and improve in one’s professional area of expertise. Balyer et al. further suggested that empowerment enhances professional and personal autonomy and facilitates collaboration and increased involvement in decision-making processes. Empowerment optimizes the potential of all parties engaged and removes limitations for individuals contributing to the process.

In the field of education, empowerment theory is often associated with the classic work of Freire (1986). Freire defined empowerment as the process by which individuals and groups gain power, access to resources, and control over their own lives.
Empowerment theory highlights participation and collaboration of individuals within an organizing structure to focus all efforts on a common identified goal.

Similarly, Robbins, Chatterjee, and Canda (1998) interpreted empowerment as the “process by which individuals and groups gain power, access to resources and control over their own lives. In doing so, they gain the ability to achieve their highest personal and collective aspirations and goals” (p. 91). Empowerment offered by a principal exhibiting servant leadership is often accompanied by growth in teachers with limited resources and capabilities. It helps all educators to embrace challenges, problem solve, and handle multifaceted issues that the educational process brings (Hammond, 2018).

**Humility**

According to Sousa and van Dierendonck (2017), a great leader requires and demands the acceptance of others, and leaders must be ready to equip their followers with the implied understanding that taking responsibility for others as well as for oneself leads to a growth in humility.

Additionally Verdorfer (2016) focused on examining mindfulness as it relates to servant leadership. It is an approach that makes humility and altruism the central components of the servant leadership process. The research indicates that servant leaders display dispositional mindfulness, which has a direct correlation to the servant leadership dimensions of authenticity and humility. Mindfulness is the psychological process of purposely bringing one’s attention to experiences occurring in the present moment. The act of mindfulness is related to less dysfunctional outcomes such as depression, negativity, burnout and anxiety (Verdorfer, 2016).
To be both an altruistic and effective leader, the school leader must work to empower those he or she leads (Bushell, 2019). The servant leader exhibits a demonstrative level of humility to develop trust relationships. Such actions indirectly, yet seemingly innately, transfer the need of serving to others. The processes of engaging and mentoring must be an apparent priority in nurturing those aspiring to leadership roles (Bushell, 2019).

Service

The term service leadership is a concept based on the philosophy of “servant leadership,” a term that was coined by Robert K. Greenleaf (1970). This concept defines the leader a servant first. With this form of leadership, the priority of the leader is to serve others. This form of leadership is characterized by selflessness and a focus on outcomes for others.

Price, Moolenaar, Tschannen-Moran, and Gareis (2015) asserted that informed school leaders focus on allowing a spirit of service to create a culture of high performance within the school environment and understand how essential service is fostering a safe and successful climate for all. An astute leader operates from a space of stewardship to promote service by all involved. He understands the importance of reciprocal relationships between school and community that construct high-functioning relationships that heighten engagement by all stakeholders. Engaging with a spirit of service welcomes parent and community involvement, maintains open lines of communication, and allows for all stakeholders to participate in planning and decision-making (Price et al., 2015).
The role of service by school leaders supports the relationships between individual and team members in schools. Servant culture and servant leadership in schools influence outcomes at all levels of school culture. They influence both behavioral norms and expectations. Such service norms can be fostered and learned by members of the organization in order to establish a service culture. These norms affect how individuals and team members develop service for others.

The school principal who is focused on creating a culture of service and high performance tends to be a “regretless service” (Hung, Tsai, & Wu, 2016, p. 34). This means that the principal promotes selfless contributions in order to model and be the change needed for the staff. This includes adopting and promoting behaviors of service, including helping to experience growth and be empowered to make substantive change. Hung et al. (2016) further asserted that this promotes strengthening ties between students, teachers, and parents to enhance academic and socioemotional experiences for students. Service provided by servant leaders is delivered by caring, assisting others, respecting and supporting the overall growth of the school community.

Trust

According to Shaw (2014), trust is a critical building block used to develop the relationship between servant leaders and followers and stakeholders. Trust is essential for establishing a productive climate and culture of the organization. Trust then allows for team members working within the organization to do so freely, allowing for mistakes and learnings from said experiences. This trust and these efforts build foundational constructs to better the organization (Shaw, 2014).
How to establish trust as a leader of an organization is no easy task. In fact, there are several steps to building trust within the workplace according to Reina and Reina (2010). The first step is that of the leader to understand that building trust is hard work. Trust must not be assumed but instead earned. It comes from a conscious effort to walk the talk, keep promises, and align behavior with values. It is essential to be both honest and supportive, to tell the truth and not just say what people want to hear. That allows leaders to actively listen. In order to build trust, leaders must be consistent and model the behavior they seek in others. Most importantly, they must build accountability by acknowledging their mistakes and their successes as a leader. Team members will then see them as credible and follow their lead (Reina & Reina, 2010).

In order to build trust as a servant leader, the leader must see people’s potential. This leader will allow followers to execute with some level of autonomy and not be characterized as objects of singular satisfaction. The servant leader accepts that all people involved contribute value to the cause and all engage in the pursuit of trust. Fostering trust involves the servant leader employing various strategies to ensure alignment with his followers (Reina & Reina, 2010). Trust demonstrated by a servant leader is exhibited by the ability to empower followers, provoke reflections, and foster growth to build confidence in all people to carry out the tasks at hand.

**Vision**

Phimkoh, Tesaputa, and Somprach (2015) asserted that the vision should give the clarity needed to provide the ideas of vision sharing, the implementation of the vision, and the creation of the vision within the organization. The vision serves as a leadership indicator that supports staff and students to set goals and establish protocols necessary to
meet and exceed the challenges set before them with a clear path. The vision statement for a school should describe a school’s ideals and its core organizational values. The vision should address its long-term objectives and what it hopes that students will learn or be capable of doing after graduating (Phimkoh et al., 2015).

Winston and Hartsfield (2004) explained that great principals, especially servant leaders, take responsibility for the success of every student in their school. The servant leader learns about the followers’ vision for the organization and seeks to find ways where the followers can engage in activities that benefit them and the organization (Winston & Hartsfield, 2004). Servant leaders also feel personally responsible for the staff with whom they serve. Classroom teachers are essential to the success of the students they teach; it is the responsibility of the principal to ensure high-quality education to all students in school. A servant leader operates in a manner that addresses both successes and failures while pursuing the school vision. The servant leader will effectively model a vision for the school and then inspire the team to share the vision. This process allows the team to take ownership of their unique skills and establish buy-in to pursuing the vision (Winston & Hartsfield, 2004).

**Leadership in K-12 Schools**

Successful school leadership is not random but instead very methodical with a discoverable process (D. Wilson, 2011). According to D. Wilson (2011), in schools with high student achievement, nonnegotiable elements have been identified. Such elements have been embedded in the schools. Successful educational leaders understand that change is accompanied by challenges. They address the needed change with a balance of
a sense of urgency balanced with patience, persistence, and optimism. And successful school leaders believe that all students can be successful.

**High School Principals Exemplifying Servant Leadership**

Many school principals have adopted servant leadership practices and may not be aware of what their behaviors demonstrate. According to Sergiovanni (1996), “They exercise their stewardship responsibilities by committing themselves to building, serving, caring for, and protecting the school and its purposes” (p. 270). This is a principal’s way of serving others first.

According to Malingkas, Senduk, Simandjuntak, and Binilang (2018), school leaders are good shepherds:

Like a shepherd, a headmaster serves, cares for, and becomes a humble leader. A fullness of life for all, especially the lost, forgotten, and vulnerable should be our mission. Economic, affective, spiritual, and educational poverty should not, if we can help it, be allowed to be barriers in our educational network. (p. 3)

This message indicates that a principal’s performance will be enhanced if this individual is willing to serve, provide care, cooperate, and show empathy with others while completing work duties. Furthermore, a servant leader is expected to have a positive influence over the school’s overall performance. Srimulyani (2013) asserted that servant leadership has both a positive and a significant impact on teacher performance.

Principals act as a servant leader by demonstrating trust and empowerment with those with whom they work. Principals with the servant leadership mindset operate with a spirit of service that is visible to their teachers, team members, and stakeholders. The role of the servant leader as principal is multifaceted. The servant leader should establish
a clear vision of the teacher’s role in the school (Patterson, 2003). He or she should empower the teachers. He or she should have high levels of integrity in completing assigned tasks. And he or she should model behaviors to enhance self-efficacy (Nixson, 2005).

**Culture of High Performance**

Developing a school culture is usually a long and collaborative process. Developing a culture of high performance adds a few tasks to the list. High-performing schools are defined by multiple characteristics. However, most schools defined as possessing a high-performing culture share many of the characteristics. According to Shannon and Bylsma (2007), high-performing schools have several things in common. Such schools have clear and shared focus. They have high standards and expectations for all students. They have effective school leadership. They engage in high levels of collaboration and communication. They deploy curriculum and instructional strategies that are aligned with state standards. They employ a monitoring system for frequent monitoring of teaching and learning. Providing pertinent professional development to staff is essential. They have a supportive learning environment. They promote high levels of community and parent engagement to promote partnership in the educational process.

The culture of high performance in schools is accompanied by a particular growth mindset (Yeager et al., 2019). While schools may be performing well, or some even excellently, there is always room for improvement. Aspiring to greatness and excellence, and acting on those aspirations, is equally important as arriving at the level of being a
high-performing school. Arthur Ashe (n.d.) said, “Success is as much a journey as it is a destination” (para. 1).

Bulach, Lunenberg, and Potter (2008) asserted that high-performing schools have high student achievement and low student and teacher absenteeism. These measures of student performance align with those established by the California Department of Education and are monitored by the California School Dashboard (n.d.).

Bulach et al. (2008) asserted further that the students in schools with a high-performing culture also have few discipline issues with students. Students are more focused, which results in greater time on task. Such behaviors promote higher teacher morale, lower teacher absenteeism, and enhanced parental support. The student peer group for students in high-performing schools is a very positive force instead of a negative one. The results of all of these dynamics working together are students and faculty who trust one another and have a cooperative attitude.

Attributes of High Performance

The attributes of high performance that were examined are collective efficacy, PLCs, and student performance. Collective efficacy refers to a shared belief that the school’s staff can have a positive impact on student achievement despite other influences in the students’ lives that may challenge their success (State Government of Victoria, Australia, 2019). A professional learning community (PLC) is defined as a group of educators who meet regularly, share strategy, and work collaboratively to improve teaching skills and the academic performance of students (Great Schools Partnership, 2014). And student performance is described as information about the academic progress of a single student (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). All of the aforementioned
attributes are examined in relation to how they contribute to establishing a culture of high performance in schools.

**Collective Efficacy**

Donohoo, Hattie, and Eells (2018) attested that when teams of educators believe they have the ability to make a difference, exciting things can happen in a school. Collective efficacy is a shared belief system that the staff at the school can have a positive impact on student achievement. The belief is that this impact can happen in spite of other influences in the students’ lives that may challenge their success. Collective efficacy is evident when teachers see themselves as part of a team working to help their students. Donohoo et al. added that when educators believe in their collective ability to lead the improvement of student outcomes, the result is higher levels of achievement.

In schools where collective efficacy is prevalent, teachers display a positive attitude to professional development, implement evidence-based instructional practices with fidelity, and have a stronger focus on academic pursuits. In addition, student behavior improves as students exhibit more positive beliefs about their ability to grow and learn at school (Donohoo & Katz, 2017).

The role of principals and school leaders includes many responsibilities. Donohoo and Katz (2017) suggested that they must recognize the relationship between their instructional leadership and the ability for teachers to collaborate for improvement. They must provide systems that support teachers to engage in collaborative cycles of inquiry that build literacy and math skills. They create an environment that builds relational trust among teachers. They trust and empower teachers to lead their own professional learning. And they model the language of collective efficacy.
According to Donohoo and Katz (2017), as collective efficacy develops in a school, the next step is to set expectations, monitor the work of collaborative inquiry, and provide feedback to teachers that the work is focused. Strong principals ensure that goals are achievable and that short-term goals are celebrated along the way.

Professional Learning Communities

According to DuFour and Fullan (2013), a PLC is an ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve. PLCs operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continual job-embedded learning for educators. According to DuFour and Fullan, the effective PLC has essential elements:

- Focus on learning
- A collaborative culture with a focus on learning for all
- Collective inquiry into best practices and current reality
- Action orientation: Learning by doing
- Commitment to continuous improvement
- Results oriented

The essence of the PLC is the focus on the learning of each student (DuFour & Fullan, 2013). When schools and districts function as PLCs, the educators within the organization embrace and facilitate high levels of learning for all students. The foundation of the PLC is the belief that the educators believe that the role of the school is to produce high levels of learning and the fundamental responsibility of the educators in the school is to work toward such a goal. The PLC creates a clear and guided vision of
what the organization must do in order to help its students. The plan includes identifying exactly what the student must learn, monitoring student learning, providing interventions and support, providing feedback, and extending learning when students have mastered the prescribed standards.

The PLC is composed of a collaborative team of educators (DuFour, 2009). Members of the team work together to achieve common goals for which they are mutually accountable. The goals are linked to the learning for all. Team members must stay focused on the right issues. The collaboration represents a systemic process in which teachers work together to impact their classroom practice, which will lead to enhanced results for their students, their teams, and their school (DuFour, 2009).

According to Voelkel (2017), collective inquiry is a valuable tool in the PLC process. It forces team members to survey their current reality, skill sets, and results. It enables members of the PLC team to develop new skills and capabilities that lead to new experiences and awareness. The heightened awareness transforms into a fundamental shift in attitude, beliefs, and habits that transform the culture of the school in the long run.

The PLC is action oriented and focused on results (DuFour, 2005). Members of the team move quickly to turn goals into action and visions into reality. Team members understand that the most powerful learning occurs in the context of taking action. Mintzberg (2004) asserted that deep learning requires experience, which requires taking action. He stated that it “is as much about doing in order to think as thinking in order to do” (Mintzberg, 2004, p. 10). Members of PLCs recognize that learning by doing is more profound. For organizations to obtain different results, they must “do” differently, according to Mintzberg.
The real work in the PLC is the commitment to continual improvement (DuFour, 2009). DuFour (2009) suggested that there is no acceptance of status quo and a constant search for a better way to achieve goals and accomplish the purpose of the organization. He urged educators to study the data, develop applicable and relevant strategies, analyze the impact of the employ of such strategies, and apply successful strategies in a universal manner. The systematic way to keep members engaged in this work is by ongoing evidence gathering of current levels of student learning. They should study the data, develop strategies and best practices in pedagogy to build on student strengths and apply interventions to address weaknesses, implement strategies and ideas, analyze the impact of the changes to discover what was effective and what was not, and apply the new knowledge in the next cycle of continuous improvement, with data as the basis for all work. This work is the responsibility of all educators on staff, not just the school principal.

Members of PLCs recognize that their efforts in the aforementioned areas must be assessed on the basis of results rather than intentions. The set goals and objectives must be subjected to ongoing assessment on the basis of tangible results. Senge (1994) suggested that “the rationale for any strategy for building a learning organization revolves around the premise that such organizations will produce dramatically improved results” (p. 44).

Student Performance

According to the U.S. Department of Education (n.d.), student performance is described as information about the academic performance of students. It includes, but is not limited to, data such as formative assessments, summative assessments, coursework,
instructor observations, and information about student engagement, attendance, and student behavior. In the state of California, student performance data are housed and shared on the California School Dashboard (n.d.). The California School Dashboard is at the core of the state’s educational accountability system. The purpose of the dashboard is to help parents and educators identify strengths and areas for improvement for the students being served. The state measures student performance based on two factors: current year results and whether results improved from the prior year.

The state measures include chronic absenteeism, graduation rate, suspension rate, and academic performance (in mathematics and English language arts). Future state measures will include performance on the California State Science Test. The performance levels on state measures, using comparable statewide data, are represented by one of five colors: red, orange, yellow, green, or blue. On the color spectrum, red represents the lowest performance level and blue represents the highest performance level (California School Dashboard, n.d.).

Local measures are reported by school districts, county offices of education, and charter schools based on data available at the local level. These measures also include clean and safe buildings, school climate, parent engagement, and access to a broad course of study (California School Dashboard, n.d.).

In this study, the researcher focused on two state measures: chronic absenteeism and academic performance based on assessment results. Chronic absenteeism is a primary cause of poor academic achievement. It is defined as missing at least 10% of days in a school year for any reason, including excused and unexcused absences. In a typical school year this would equate to approximately 18 missed days of school.
According to Gottfried (2014), chronic absenteeism reduces math and reading assessment scores, reduces educational engagement, and decreases social engagement, and the undermeasured aspect of student absenteeism impedes students’ attainment.

Academic performance is a measure is a using performance on the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessment (SBAC) and the California Alternate Assessments (CAA) for English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics. These assessments are administered to students in Grades 3 through 11. These assessments determine the distance from standard (DFS). Distance from Standard (DFS) represents the distance between a student’s score on the Smarter Balanced Assessments and the Standard Met Achievement level threshold (California Department of Education, n.d.).

**Summary**

This review of the literature focused on the perceived impact of the seven servant leadership constructs established by van Dierendonck and Patterson (2010) on establishing a culture of high performance. Researchers such as Greenleaf (2003), van Dierendonck and Patterson (2010), Stone, Russell, and Patterson (2004), and Liden et al. (2014) studied servant leadership constructs. These constructs included love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service. However, the research lacked studies that examined multiple principles of leadership and their collective impact on developing highly effective schools and increased student performance. There is also a lack of clarity regarding the degree of importance each of the servant leadership constructs has in creating a school culture focused on increased student achievement.

Chapter II contained a fundamental review of the literature regarding servant leadership and specifically a review of literature regarding Patterson’s (2003) seven servant leadership constructs and how they could impact the culture of school. A synthesis matrix was created to organize the various literary sources, sorted by constructs and related topics.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research procedures and methodology utilized to conduct the research in this study. The purpose statement and research questions established the justification and basis for the research on high school principals regarding servant leadership and student performance. This chapter also incorporates a description of the research design, population, sample, instrumentation, validity/reliability, data collection, data analysis, and limitations as they relate to this study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore and describe high school principals’ perceived impact of the seven servant leadership constructs developed by Patterson (2003) for establishing a culture of high performance.

Research Questions

Central Question

What is the impact of Patterson’s (2003) seven servant leadership constructs on establishing a culture of high performance as perceived by high school principals?

Subquestions

1. What is the impact of the agapao love leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?
2. What is the impact of the humility leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?
3. What is the impact of the altruism leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?
4. What is the impact of the vision leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?

5. What is the impact of the trust leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?

6. What is the impact of the empowerment leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?

7. What is the impact of the service leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?

**Research Design**

This study contributes to a larger thematic study, which includes a group of eight researchers. It focuses on how K-12 leaders’ perceived the impact of Patterson’s seven servant leadership constructs on establishing a culture of high performance. Patton (2015) stated that qualitative studies examine systemic functions and consequences of system dynamics to provide context for the focus of the study. Patton further stated that the “context is obtained through the study by the researcher determining what’s going on around the people, groups, organizations, communities, or systems of interest” (p. 4). Qualitative research is a method of observation that is used to gather data that is non-numerical. Qualitative research focuses on the meanings, concepts, and definitions of things. There are various types of qualitative research methodologies. Considering such, a phenomenological study was deemed the most appropriate for this study. phenomenology has three primary elements: (a) It is the study of the lived experiences of persons, (b) whose experience is a conscious process, and (c) there is development of interpretations of the essences of these experiences.
Pure phenomenological research seeks essentially to describe rather than explain, and to start from a perspective free from hypothesis or preconceptions (Spiegelberg, 1971). Phenomenology is a form of qualitative research that focuses on an individual’s lived experiences. It focuses on the commonality of the lived experience within a particular group. This study focused on the commonality of lived experiences of high school principals who have established a culture of high performance and their perceptions of the importance of Patterson’s seven constructs for developing school cultures of high performance. Through this process, the researcher can construct a more universal meaning of the experience and arrive at a more profound understanding of the phenomenon (servant leadership and its impact on culture). According to Edmund Husserl, the father of phenomenology, “Pure phenomenology claims to be the science of pure phenomenal” (Spiegelberg, 1971 p. 11). The rationale for the employ of phenomenology in this study was to gather the lived experiences of high school principals, determine best practices employed by them within the servant leadership framework, and determine the impact of Patterson’s (2003) seven servant leadership constructs for establishing a culture of high performance.

The eight peer thematic researchers, working with two faculty advisors, determined to use the qualitative phenomenological design to gather data for this study. The goal of this thematic study was to understand how individuals make sense out of a particular situation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010), specifically how servant leadership qualities of a high school principal impact a culture of high performance. The thematic team opted to utilize traditional data collection methodologies for phenomenology (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010), the unstructured interview. The interview process was
utilized to investigate the practices, experiences, decisions, and outcomes of the participants to identify patterns of servant leadership that prevailed.

The thematic group of eight researchers decided to utilize the qualitative phenomenological method to study servant leadership characters based on seven constructs: agapao love, service, humility, altruism, trust, vision, and empowerment. The researchers used the same methodology across a diversified group of educators within K-12 public education. Each researcher interviewed eight school leaders in the researcher’s field. A common research design was constructed and utilized in order for the thematic team to gather wide sweeping patterns of servant leadership practices demonstrated by school leaders.

**Population**

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the population is a group of elements or cases—whether individuals, objects, or events—that conform to what the researchers intend to generalize the results of the research. The population for this phenomenological study was high school principals in California. For the purpose of this study, high school principals serve students Grades 9 through 12 in the state of California. The population for this study was 1,322 high school principals in the state of California per the California Department of Education (n.d.) website.

**Sampling Frame**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) used the term sampling frame to describe a smaller subgroup of individuals who met the specified criteria for the study. It would not have been a plausible goal for the researcher to use all 1,322 school principals in the state of California because of physical distance, access, and logistics. The sampling frame was
chosen in order to create a more convenient sample for the researcher. This sampling
frame included high school principals working in high-performing schools in Riverside
County, California. There are 73 high schools in Riverside County, California. This
study focused on high school principals within Riverside County, California, who are
leaders of high-performing schools, and who met criteria established by the thematic
team to participate in the study. The researcher selected the sample for this study, using
criterion discussed in the next section, from the sampling frame of 73 high school
principals in Riverside County. The county of Riverside was chosen because of its
proximity to the researcher.

Sample

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), a sample is defined as a group of
participants who may be selected from a larger group known as the population. The
sample for this study was selected from the sampling frame of 73 high school principals
in Riverside County, California. McMillan and Schumacher stated that when a
researcher is attempting to determine the sample size from the population, a moderate
percentage of the total population can estimate the characteristics of the population
satisfactorily. There were 73 high school principals identified by the researcher based on
the established sampling frame.

This study focused on how high school principals perceived the importance of
Patterson’s (2003) seven servant leadership constructs in creating a culture of high
performance. The researcher employed nonprobability, purposive sampling to select the
sample of eight high school principals. The process for selecting the sample for this
study involved choosing study participants from schools that exhibited a growth trend
over the past 2 years as indicated by the California School Dashboard (n.d.) within the state and local indicators such as academic achievement and attendance.

The sample size for this study was eight high school principals within Riverside County. The sample selected met at least four of the following five criteria:

1. The principal has been employed at a current high school within Riverside County with a minimum of 50 staff members.
2. The principal participant possesses a minimum of 2 or 3 years of experience at their current site.
3. The principal has a minimum of 5 years of experience in the K-12 profession.
4. The principal possesses membership in professional associations in their field, such as ACSA.
5. The principal has authored articles, paper, or materials written, published, or presented at conferences or association meetings.

This sample size of eight participants represented 11% of the target population of 73 principals within Riverside County schools. There were eight principals invited to participate in the study who met the sample criteria listed above (see Figure 3).

**Instrumentation**

The interview questions included semistructured, open-ended, and probe questions. The answers could come in the form of a list, a few sentences, or something longer such as a speech, paragraph, or essay. Probe questions are questions that are designed to help the researcher understand more about a topic. The goal in asking a probe question is to learn more about a topic without attributing bias or preconceived notions to it (Patton, 2015). The questions were all related to the research questions so
that each participant could provide detailed responses to help the researcher understand the servant leadership behaviors and related constructs of the participants and how those behaviors impact a culture of high achievement.

![Diagram of Population, Sampling Frame, and Sample](image)

*Figure 3. Population, sampling frame, and sample.*

The eight thematic members collaborated with expert faculty to develop the interview protocol for this study. The process included having teams of three thematic researchers develop draft questions using the literature and then submitting them to the expert faculty for feedback. Expert faculty provided feedback about the draft questions and then met with all eight thematic researchers to finalize the interview questions and scripted protocol (Appendix B). It is a common practice for dissertation researchers to use faculty experts to help to develop interview questions, according to Cullen, Pearson, Saha and Spear (1994).
Researcher as an Instrument of the Study

Qualitative research design engages the researcher to become an instrument of the study. As stated by Patton (2002), “In qualitative inquiry, the researcher is the instrument” (p. 14). According to Patton (2015), during fieldwork in a qualitative study, the researcher spends time in the setting under study and makes firsthand observations of activities and interactions, sometimes engaging personally in those activities as a participant observer. The researcher guided all participant interviews and participated in all data collection methods for the study. Upon completion of the study, each participant was provided an interview transcript to verify accuracy of the information and the intent of the interview process. The researcher has worked in education for more than 22 years, and in an educational leadership role for more than 9 years. In addition, this researcher is adept at conducting interviews and executing effective investigations as a part of her professional roles and responsibilities.

Reliability/Validity

In qualitative research, the researcher should use multiple procedures to check and ensure the validity of an instrument and the accuracy of the study’s findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), verifying the credibility of qualitative research can be done through data analysis, clarifying research bias, peer feedback, external audits, and field observations. All members of the thematic team met to collaborate and to develop the interview questions used in the study. The members of the team also conducted a thorough evaluation of the interview questions to ensure alignment of the research questions and purpose of the study.
Patton (2002) stated that reliability is a consequence of the validity in a study with regard to the researcher’s ability and skill in any qualitative research. Reliability in qualitative research results in consistency. In order for qualitative research to be considered reliable, the project must be credible, the research must be transferable, the process must be dependable, and the findings must be able to be confirmed. Reliability measures utilized include intercoder reliability, which is internal reliability. Patton further asserted that a test is considered reliable if it yields consistent results. Coding qualitative data requires the researcher to create high-quality codes and assign exclusive labels to phrases that refer to specific categories.

**Field Test**

According to Golafshani (2003), “Validity in qualitative research indicates consistency and trustworthiness regarding activity and events associated with the phenomenon as signified by the study results explored in the research” (as cited in Patsev, 2020, para. 4). Roberts (2010) believed that an instrument must be field tested. Therefore, prior to conducting interviews with the study participants, a field test was implemented to establish consistency by every researcher in this thematic study. The semistructured scripted interview for this study was used in a field test with one principal and one observer within Riverside County schools who were not included in the study. However, the principal did meet the study’s sample criteria. The individuals who participated in the field test were provided the interview questions and then asked to provide the research with feedback regarding the questions. The participants were encouraged to provide feedback about items that may need to be changed or eliminated from the question bank. The data were collected, transcribed, coded, and analyzed to
determine if any of the interview questions needed to be changed in order for the researcher to obtain and employ the most reliable set of interview questions that were consistent with the previously stated research questions.

**Data Collection**

In order to collect data about servant leadership characteristics of high school principals in Riverside County and the impact of such leadership on high performance, it was important for the researcher to be able to reach and communicate with the participants via live phone calls, Zoom, Google Meets, e-mail, and text messages. Each of the participants signed an informed consent document acknowledging willingness to participate in the study.

Data were collected from eight high school principals from eight different schools within Riverside County. A 15-day time frame was allotted for data collection for this study. The researcher made phone contact with each participant and sent an e-mail to each participant to provide information about the study, as well as a summary defining servant leadership and facets of the study, the seven constructs of servant leadership (agapao love, humility, altruism, vision, empowerment, trust, and service; Appendix C). The contact information was available on public access school websites. The summary allowed the participants to obtain a clear understanding about the constructs of servant leadership and to provide the researcher with more detailed responses to the interview questions. The researcher conducted the interviews using Zoom due to a public health emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. In order to ensure the privacy of each participant, each interview was conducted with both the researcher and the principal participant in an isolated space with no other parties present. At the beginning of each
interview, the researcher introduced herself and asked the participant if he or she had questions about the research, the interview process, or informed consent. The researcher utilized a script to engage the semistructured interviews. The script ensured that each participant was asked the same questions during the interview process. The interview process consisted of use of a uniform set of fixed interview questions to be asked of all participants (Patton, 2002). Each participant was e-mailed in advance of the interview questions and asked to sign a letter of consent for permission to record/document participant responses to allow the researcher to review the interview responses at a later date. The time allotted for each interview was 45 minutes and was sufficient for completion for all participants. Each participant was given a copy of their transcript and were requested to review and verify the accuracy prior to coding the data.

This study was approved by the Brandman University Institutional Review Board (BUIRB) before formal data collection began (Appendix D). Informed consent (Appendix E) and the Brandman Bill of Rights (Appendix F) was required and obtained from each participant prior to participation in the interview. The informed consent form clearly delineated the procedures of the study and the participant’s right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participation in the study guaranteed participants’ anonymity. None of the names or identifying information were collected at any time during the study. The researcher explained to each participant that all data collected during the interview would be held in strict confidence. All documents would be maintained in a locked confidential file. The participants were also informed that codes, rather than individual responses would be used during the data analysis process. This would ensure confidentiality throughout the study. Participants were reminded that participation was
both voluntary and confidential and that no personal information would be stored in the file. All files were completely destroyed after the study was completed.

Observations and Artifacts

The research for this study was conducted during a national health crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore all data collection and observations occurred in a virtual environment. The virtual environment limited the researcher’s ability to collect extensive observation data; however, the researcher was able to look for gestures, facial expressions, and changes in tone during the interview process. Observations were documented as field notes, which were later “text recorded by the researcher during an observation in a qualitative study” (Creswell, 2009, p. 224).

In addition to interviews and observations, artifacts were another type of data collected and included in the triangulation of data to enhance the validity of the study. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) stated that artifacts are tangible manifestations that describe people’s knowledge, experiences, actions, and values. The researcher collected artifacts by searching the school websites of the participants and by requesting documents from the participants directly. Such artifacts included copies of the school’s mission statement, vision statement, communication with key stakeholders, memorandum, and other pertinent documents available to the researcher that would substantiate the essence of the seven constructs and how they relate to the school’s culture of high performance.

Data Analysis

The coding of the data for this study was multifaceted. It involved the coding for themes, scanning for codes, and identifying the frequency of recurring themes using NVivo. The interviews were transcribed and coded. Thereafter, frequency tables were
developed to organize the themes. The data collected from artifacts and observations were analyzed and coded manually with the use of Microsoft Excel. These data were recorded using frequency tables to be used for data analysis in Chapter IV.

The focus of this study was the perceived impact of Patterson’s (2003) seven servant leadership constructs on high school principals in establishing a culture of high performance. In this study the researcher used inductive analysis to process the data collected. It also allowed the data that were collected to be compared to develop themes, threads, and categories (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The researcher used the following eight steps in coding to process the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

1. Read the transcription of the interviews.
2. Identified the underlying meaning.
3. Generated a list of topics. Clustered similar topics and placed them into columns.
4. Abbreviated the topics and labeled as codes and go back to review the data. Wrote the codes next to the appropriate segments of text. Determined if new categories emerged from the process.
5. Turned the topics into categories using descriptive wording. Reduced the total list of categories by combining those related.
6. Finalized the list of abbreviations for codes and alphabetized them.
7. Placed appropriate data into each category and performed preliminary analysis.
8. If needed, recoded existing data.

This process helped the researcher to develop a coding chart to represent topics, themes, repetition, and similarities. The data were then grouped by themes and common threads for each research question.
Intercoder Reliability

There were several actions taken to facilitate obtaining interrater reliability. In addition to conducting field-testing of the interview protocol, there was also the employ of a research expert to review a sample of the transcribed interview data to add inter-rater reliability to the study. This expert is an experienced qualitative researcher, with working knowledge of NVivo software and analyzing interview transcripts, and has earned a doctorate degree. According to Lombard, Snyder-Duch, and Campanella Bracken (2010), inter-rater reliability is the use of one or more researchers to independently analyze and code data to establish a level of consistency in the findings. The researcher and the research expert met via Zoom to each of their analysis of the data samples. As appropriate, and applicable, the researcher made adjustments to maximize the reliability of the data analysis. To heighten research reliability, a peer researcher analyzed 10% of the data from this study and the description of the study’s themes (nodes) to establish a reliability measure of 80% or greater (Patton, 2015). Chapter IV of the study presents the themes that emerged from the data analysis in great detail.

As a final step, the researcher also utilized NVivo as a tool to code the data and provide a more efficient final analysis of the data. NVivo allowed the researcher to save time and work more efficiently, quickly import, analyze, and explore data, and to uncover connections that were not possible manually. NVivo is a software that is intended to help users organize and analyze nonnumerical or unstructured data. The software allows users to classify, sort and arrange information, examine relationships in data, and combine analysis with linking, shaping, searching, and modeling.
NVivo helped the researcher to identify the themes with similar responses. After the analysis was completed using NVivo, the researcher studied all of the themes that were identified for the high school principals and identified the similarities and differences in the themes that surfaced. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) described inductive analysis as a method to process qualitative data and gather significance from the data that were collected. Both the data and the findings were reviewed for consistency among the different interviewees and the researcher organized the data using frequency tables for analysis in Chapter IV. This supported the triangulation of the data that established the findings.

**Limitations**

Limitations of a research study are those characteristics of design or methodology that impact or influences the interpretation of the findings from the research. Limitations represent weakness within a research design that may influence outcomes and conclusions of the research. The limitations identified for this study were the following:

1. The population/sample comprised high school principals in Riverside County. This population did not include principals from middle schools or elementary schools in Riverside County.
2. The principals were able to refuse to discuss or share information that made them feel uncomfortable.
3. The small size of the sample limited the generalizability of the study as the study included 73 high school principals within the Riverside County school districts.
4. Interviews provide indirect information filtered through the views of interviewees. The interviews were conducted virtually due to a current worldwide health crisis.
(COVID-19), instead of in the natural school setting. There was a chance for the presence (virtual presence) of the researcher to bias responses.

5. And finally, not all participants are equally articulate and perceptive (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).
CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Overview

This qualitative phenomenological study investigated the perceptions of high school principals of high-performing schools and the impact of Patterson’s (2003) servant leadership constructs on the culture of high student performance. The study explores the lived experience of high school principals for each of Patterson’s seven constructs: agapao love, altruism, empowerment, humility, vision, trust, and service. Chapter IV reiterates the purpose of the study, research questions, and research methods and data collection methods used in the study. This chapter provides a detailed analysis for each of the established interview questions and closes with a summary of findings.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore and describe high school principals’ perceived impact of the seven servant leadership constructs established by Patterson (2003) on establishing a culture of high performance.

Research Questions

The research question and subquestions were devised to study the perceived impact of Patterson’s (2003) servant leadership constructs on establishing a culture of high performance. The questions are as follows:

Central Question

What is the impact of Patterson’s (2003) seven servant leadership constructs on establishing a culture of high performance as perceived by high school principals?
Subquestions

1. What is the impact of the agapao love leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?

2. What is the impact of the humility leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?

3. What is the impact of the altruism leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?

4. What is the impact of the vision leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?

5. What is the impact of the trust leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?

6. What is the impact of the empowerment leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?

7. What is the impact of the service leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

This phenomenological study, a study of phenomena, focuses on an individual’s lived experience. Because the purpose of this study was to discover the experiences of a specific population, the thematic team decided that a phenomenological study was the most appropriate course to take to address the established research question and subquestions. Patton (2015) stated that a phenomenological study requires intricate interviews with those who have direct experience in order to learn the true meaning of their relevant lived experience. The goal of this phenomenological study was to establish
a description of high school principals’ perceptions of the impact of Patterson’s (2003) seven servant leadership constructs on establishing a culture of high student performance. The thematic team opted for conducting in-depth interviews employing semistructured questions as the primary data collection method. Interviews were the primary data collection method, but supplemental artifacts were also collected and compiled from the participants of the study. These artifacts were obtained from school websites, educational websites, social media, and other public access points on the world wide web. Triangulating the research data was substantiated by these interview responses, observations during the Zoom interviews, and artifacts. Observations in interviews included participant movements, facial expressions, and shift in tone.

**Data Collection and Participants**

In order to collect data about servant leadership characteristics of high school principals in Riverside County and the impact of such leadership on the culture of high performance it was important for the researcher to be able to reach and communicate with the participants via live phone calls, Zoom, e-mail, and text messages. Each of the participants signed an informed consent document for the purpose of establishing their willingness to participate.

Data were collected from eight high school principals from eight different schools representing 5 districts within Riverside County. A 15-day time frame was allotted for data collection for this study. The researcher made phone contact with each participant and sent an e-mail to each participant to provide information about the study and a summary defining servant leadership and facets of the study, the seven constructs of servant leadership (agapao love, humility, altruism, vision, empowerment, trust, and
service; see Appendix C). The contact information was available on public access school websites. The summary allowed the participants to obtain a clear understanding about the constructs of servant leadership and to provide the researcher with more detailed responses to the interview questions. The researcher conducted the interviews using Zoom due to a public health emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. In order to ensure the privacy of each participant, each interview was conducted with both the researcher and the principal participant in an isolated space with no other parties present. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher introduced herself and asked the participant if they had questions about the research, the interview process, or the informed consent. The researcher utilized a script to engage the semistructured interviews. The script ensured that each participant was asked the same questions during the interview process. The interview process consisted of the use of a uniform set of fixed interview questions to be asked of all participants (Patton, 2002). Each participant was e-mailed in advance of the interview and asked to sign a letter of consent for permission to record/document participant responses to allow the researcher to review the interview responses at a later date. The time allotted for each interview was sufficient for completion for all participants. All interviews were transcribed and coded in order to identify patterns in the data.

This study was approved by the Brandman University Institutional Review Board (BUIRB) before formal data collection began (Appendix D). Informed consent (Appendix E) was required and obtained from each participant prior to participation in the interview. The informed consent form clearly delineated the procedures of the study and the participants’ right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants in this
study were guaranteed anonymity. None of the names or identifying information were collected at any time during the study. The researcher explained to each participant that all data collected during the interview would be held in strict confidence. All documents would be maintained in a locked confidential file. The participants were also informed that codes, rather than individual responses, would be used during the data analysis process. This would ensure confidentiality throughout the study. Participants were reminded that participation was both voluntary and confidential and that no personal information would be stored in the file. All files will be destroyed three years after the study was completed.

**Interview, Observation, and Artifact Data Collection**

According to Cobb and Forbes (2002), Qualitative research requires the researcher to be engaged in the lives of the people studied – to hear their stories, grasp their point of view, and understand their meanings. Through interviews, study participants vividly describe their experiences and perspectives to researcher. (p. M197) Therefore, the nature of this phenomenological study required the researcher to serve as the primary instrument for data collection. Researcher become the instrument in qualitative research when they become immersed in the environment in order to collect data and understand phenomena (Patton, 2015). The researcher in this study conducted the interviews to gain insight into the lived experiences of the participants, high school principals.

The phenomenological interview focuses on of capturing the anecdotal stories through the employ of semistructured, yet informal, interactive interviews (Patton, 2015).
Such interviews unfortunately do introduce the potential for bias. In order to minimize such bias, the thematic team developed an interview protocol (Appendix G) and executed a field test with experienced high school principals and experienced researchers. The researcher consistently adhered to the interview protocol in order to provoke a natural response from the participants. Each interview was conducted via remote using Zoom Video Conferencing in order to maintain safe standards for participation during the COVID-19 Pandemic. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Each interview ranged in length from 32 to 51 minutes. Interview transcripts were shared with each participant after the interview to validate the content and data collected.

In addition to direct responses to the interview questions, the researcher collected observational data during the recorded Zoom interviews as well as relevant artifacts for each participant. During the interviews, observational data that were collected and noted included observed body language, facial expressions, tone, physical manipulation (i.e., fidgeting). Moreover, the researcher collected artifacts from each of the eight participants’ school websites, social media accounts, and School Accountability Report Card (SARC).

**Population**

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the population is a group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects, or events, that conform to what the researchers intend to generalize the results of the research. The population for this phenomenological study was high school principals in California. For the purpose of this study, high school principals serve students in Grades 9-12 in the state of California. The
population for this study was 1,322 high school principals in the state of California per the California Department of Education (n.d.) website.

**Sampling Frame**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) used the term *sampling frame* to describe a smaller subgroup of individuals who met the specified criteria for the study. It would not have been a plausible goal for the researcher to use all 1,322 school principals in the state of California because of physical distance, access, and logistics. The sampling frame was chosen in order to create a more convenient sample of the researcher. This sampling frame included high school principals working in high-performing schools in Riverside County, California. There are 73 high schools in Riverside County, California. The county of Riverside was chosen because of its proximity to the researcher (see Figure 3, repeated here for ease of reference).

**Sample**

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), a sample is defined as a group of participants who may be selected from a larger group known as the population. The sample for this study was selected from the sampling frame of 73 high school principals in Riverside County, California. McMillan and Schumacher stated that when a researcher is attempting to determine the sample size from the population, a moderate percentage of the total population can estimate the characteristics of the population satisfactorily. All 73 high schools were considered in the target population and then screened by the researcher to determine which schools demonstrated a culture of high performance as defined demonstrating a growth trend over past 2 years as indicated by
the California Dashboard within the state and local indicators such as assessment data and attendance.

![Image](image_url)

*Figure 3. Population, sampling frame, and sample.*

This study focused on individual interviews with eight high school principals of high-performing schools to add to this researcher’s understanding of their servant leadership practices. The smaller sample size provided “valuable and information-rich” data (Patton, 2015). The data collected were synthesized and then coded to establish teams.

The study employed nonprobability purposeful sampling using the interview process to gather the information necessary to answer the research questions. For this study, the data collection process employed individual interviews with high school principals in regard to their perceptions of servant leadership constructs.
The target population for this study included participants from schools that exhibited a growth trend over the past two years as indicated by the California Dashboard within the state and local indicators such as academic achievement and attendance and met four of the following five criteria:

The sample selected met four of the following five criteria:

1. The principal is employed at a current high school within Riverside County with a minimum of 50 staff members.
2. The principal has a minimum of 2 or 3 years of leadership experience at the current site.
3. The principal has a minimum of 5 years of experience in the K12 profession.
4. The principal possesses memberships in professional associations such as the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA).
5. The principal has had articles, paper, or materials written, published, or presented at conferences or association meetings.

This sample size of eight participants represented 11% of the target population of 73 principals within Riverside County schools. There were eight principals selected to participate in the study who meet the sample criteria listed above (see Table 1).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study participant</th>
<th>School leader with a min of 50 staff</th>
<th>Min 5 years in K-12 leadership</th>
<th>Min 3 years of experience current school</th>
<th>Publication</th>
<th>Member in professional organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Demographic Data

Eight public high school principals who met the established criteria were selected to participate in the study. In order to maintain participant confidentiality, the participants were each assigned a number based on the date that they agreed to participate in the study. The interviews were subsequently conducted in the same numeric order. As a result, demographic data were reported without identifying data for any study participant. All eight public high school principals were employed in Riverside County, California. Participants included four male and four female principals. Years of educational experience ranged from 19 to 26 years while years as a high school principal ranged from 7 to 18 years. Table 2 represents the demographics of the eight public high school principals who participated in the study.

Table 2

Demographic Data of Study Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Yrs. in education</th>
<th>Yrs. as a principal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Presentation and Analysis of Data

The researcher used the following qualitative research methods to collect data: interviews, observations, and artifact/data collection. These tools were utilized to explore and describe high school principals’ perceived impact of Patterson’s (2003) servant leadership constructs on establishing a culture of high performance. The data that were
collected were coded into themes. Themes arose from the shared lived experiences that surfaced during interviews and aligned with the research question and subquestions.

**Validity and Reliability**

Multiple tools were utilized to establish reliability and validity within the study. The researcher instituted a field test prior to the study, developed interview protocol with the thematic team, triangulated data, reviewed interview transcripts, and employed intercoder reliability. The qualitative phenomenological study required the researcher to interact directly with the participants during comprehensive semistructured interviews. During the interviews, body language, facial expressions, vocal tone, and movements of the participants were noted and recorded in the data. In addition to the interviews, artifacts were collected and added to the data. The data that were triangulated were sourced from interviews, observations, and collected artifacts. The interview protocol deployed was developed by the thematic team and was reviewed and approved by two experienced qualitative researchers. Such experts ensured alignment of the interview protocol with the research questions and subquestions. A field test was executed, prior to the study, to test the protocol. After the field test, necessary revisions to the protocol were established based on a consensus from the thematic team. Transcripts were provided to each study participant to confirm the accuracy of the interview data. One member of the thematic team separately analyzed and coded the data collected from one interview and established intercoder reliability at a rate of 92% regarding agreement for themes.
Data by Research Question

The data collected were organized and are presented in a manner that aligns with each of the research subquestions used in the study. Each subquestion is directly related to one of the seven servant leadership constructs. The central question, “What is the impact of Patterson’s (2003) seven servant leadership constructs on establishing a culture of high performance as perceived by high school principals of high performing schools in Riverside County, California?” was addressed through each of the following subquestions.

1. What is the impact of the agapao love leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?
2. What is the impact of the humility leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?
3. What is the impact of the altruism leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?
4. What is the impact of the vision leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?
5. What is the impact of the trust leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?
6. What is the impact of the empowerment leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?
7. What is the impact of the service leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?
Figures 4 and 5 provide a visual illustration of the frequency distribution and themes established. The coding process involved coding interviews, observations, and artifacts, which resulted in 21 themes and 265 frequencies across the seven constructs of agapao love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service. Interviews yielded the highest number of frequencies at 233. Artifacts yield 23 frequencies, and observations yielded the lowest number for frequencies at 9. In order for themes to be included in the study, they needed to be referred to by a minimum of four (50%) of the participants. Additionally, a theme needed to represent a minimum of 20% or more of all data coded within the construct. These resulted in a total number of 15 themes that qualified to be included in the study.

![Frequency and Percentage in Each Construct](image)

*Figure 4. Frequency and percentage in each construct.*
In addition to the 15 themes from the seven constructs, the number of themes and frequencies was also calculated. Empowerment had the highest frequency with three themes and 47 frequencies accounting for 20% of the data. With the second highest frequency of 43 and having two themes, vision accounted for 18% of the data. Agapao love had the third highest frequency with two themes, 37 frequencies accounting for 16% of the data. Trust had the fourth highest frequency with three themes, 36 frequencies accounting for 15% of the data. Altruism had the fifth highest frequency with two themes, 32 frequencies, accounting for 14% of the data. Service was the second lowest frequency with two themes, 21 frequencies accounting for 9% of the data. And finally

![Themes in Each Construct](image-url)
humility was the lowest frequency with two themes, 17 frequencies accounting for 7% of the data.

The section that follows outlines a detailed analysis of the qualitative data derived from the in-depth semistructured interviews. The data from said interviews were derived from the perceptions of eight high school principals in Riverside County, California, on the impact Patterson’s (2003) servant leadership constructs have on establishing a culture of high performance. For optimal presentation and ease of reference, the analysis is organized by subquestion and includes the definition established and agreed upon by the thematic team. Themes, per construct, are in order by number of frequencies.

**Empowerment: Subquestion 6 Theme Results**

*What is the impact of the empowerment leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?*

Empowerment is entrusting power to others, virtually giving away power to followers and allowing them to know and feel significant and important in their role and contribution. It requires effective listening, valuing love and equity, and an emphasis on teamwork. Empowerment encourages risk-taking and self-accountability to accomplish tasks and work toward goals (Blanchard, 2000; Melrose, 1995; Patterson, 2003; Russell & Stone, 2002). Findings from the interviews indicate that high school principals perceive that inclusivity, shared decision-making, and being creative/experimenting contribute to establishing a culture of high performance.

Table 3 and Figure 6 represent the prevailing themes and frequencies for empowerment. The analysis suggests that 75% (six of eight) of the participants provided examples that a culture of empowerment with inclusiveness contributes to establishing a
culture of high performance. In addition, inclusiveness was referenced 15 times in the interviews, one of the higher frequencies in the study. The analysis also reveals that seven of the eight high school principals suggested that creativity contributes to establishing a culture of high performance with a frequency of 19. The analysis further revealed that five of the eight high school principals suggested that shared decision-making contributes to establishing a culture of high performance with a frequency of 13. All frequencies were from interviews with zero references in observations or artifacts.

Table 3

*Empowerment Themes and Frequencies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>% Based on N</th>
<th>Interview sources</th>
<th>Observation sources</th>
<th>Artifact sources</th>
<th>Frequency of reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative /experiment</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared decision-making</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The N for interview participants = 8.

![Empowerment](image)

*Figure 6.* Empowerment themes and frequencies.
**Inclusiveness.** This theme was the second most frequently referenced with 15 references and 32% of the coded responses for the empowerment construct. Trends referenced within the theme suggest that staff and stakeholders are included in key discussions. Participants perceived that inclusiveness influenced the establishment of a culture of high performance as evidenced by their lived experiences shared in the interviews. Participant 5 indicated that “when decisions have to be made, I am kept in the loop. In fact, I am invited to meetings to discuss the impact of the changes and what challenges it may present as it relates to my student center and my families.”

**Experiment/creative.** This theme was the most frequently referenced with 19 references and 40% of the coded responses for the empowerment construct. Trends referenced within the theme suggest that empowerment is critical to innovation and achievement. Staff must believe that it is okay for them to try something new, take risks, or make a change without fear of retribution or getting into trouble. All participants perceived that empowerment influenced the establishment of a culture of high performance as evidenced by their lived experiences shared in the interviews. Throughout the interview, Participant 6 indicated that empowerment was a living thing within his district. He stated, “The administration team at my school embraces empowerment among the staff. It’s not just stated; it’s actually in practice, and it’s well received by the staff.”

Participant 1 shared a similar experience of empowerment in the district. When describing empowerment, Participant 1 shared, “Staff/team members are able to develop and create their own strands. The content must be relevant, but our approach, design, and method of rollout is entirely offered to us.”
**Shared decision-making.** This theme was the lowest referenced with 13 references, which represents 28% of the data coded for the empowerment construct. Trends referenced within the theme suggest that empowerment within their organization comes with rather open guidelines. Participant 6 explained that “everyone has the opportunity to be a ‘leader’ when their knowledge and opinion is regularly called upon and members can see when their input shows up in the company’s messaging and output.”

**Vision: Subquestion 4 Theme Results**

*What is the impact of the vision leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?*

Vision is a bridge from the present to the future created by a collaborative mindset, adding meaning to the organization, sustaining higher levels of motivation, and withstanding challenges (Kouzes & Posner, 2006, 2007; Landsberg, 2003; Méndez-Morse, 1993; Nanus, 1992). Findings from the interviews indicate that high school principals perceive that direction and guidance along with shared common goals contribute to establishing a culture of high performance.

Table 4 and Figure 7 represent the emerging themes and frequencies for vision. The analysis suggests that 100% of the participants provided examples that a culture of vision with shared common goals contributes to establishing a culture of high performance. In addition, having shared common goals referenced 24 times in interviews, and referenced two times in artifacts was the highest frequency in the study. The analysis also revealed that five of the eight high school principals suggested that direction and guidance from
school leaders contribute to establishing a culture of high performance with a frequency of 19. This theme was also referenced once in the artifacts.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>% Based on N</th>
<th>Interview sources</th>
<th>Observation sources</th>
<th>Artifact sources</th>
<th>Frequency of reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direction/guidance</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared common goals</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The N for interview participants = 8.

Figure 7. Vision themes and frequencies.

**Shared common goals.** This theme was the most frequently referenced for the construct of vision at 56%. The theme was referenced by 100% of the participants with a total of 24 frequencies. As a highly referenced theme, participants perceived that having shared common goals contributes to a culture of high performance. This is illustrated through the lived experiences shared during the interviews of the participants.
Trends throughout this theme include messaging, which suggests that successful schools and districts prioritize having a vision and annual goals that everyone works toward. Participant 8 shared several examples of why a shared vision is important to contributing to creating a culture of high performance. He stated, “Creating a vision is a critical piece of building a culture of high performance. This vision sets the course for everyone. A clear vision with specific objectives gets everyone going in the same direction.” He further stated, “The vision has to be part of daily activity within the organization. Daily adherence to the vision keeps it alive and meaningful.” Participant 6 stated that when staff “works together to achieve the vision, it improves the organization and the school.”

**Direction and guidance.** This theme was the second most frequently referenced for the construct of vision at 44%. The theme was referenced by 63% of participants with a total of 19 frequencies. As a highly referenced theme, participants perceived that having direction and guidance contributes to a culture of high performance. This was illustrated through the lived experiences shared during the interviews of the participants.

Trends throughout this theme include recognizing the desire for identifying the what and the how associated with the vision of the organization. Participants commented about the importance of identifying the vision as well as discussing the methodology for achieving it. Participant 5 shared several examples of the need for direction and guidance to achieve organizational goals. She stated that “any vision that is cast must encompass how and why high performance will be obtained. If the vision is the bar, then we need to be careful and thoughtful about how we set the bar.” Participant 5 indicated that such dedication to the vision positively impacts the culture of the organization.
Agapao Love: Subquestion 1 Theme Results

What is the impact of the agapao love leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?

Agapao love in Greek terms is moral love meaning to do the right thing for the right reasons. Agapao love leaders care more for their followers than for the interests of the organization resulting in greater understanding, gratitude, kindness, forgiveness, and compassion (Gunn, 2002; Patterson, 2003; Winston, 2002). Findings from the interviews indicate that the high school principals perceived that agapao love was a priority of some school leaders and that organizational interests, bottom line, and productivity contribute to establishing a culture of high performance.

Table 5 and Figure 8 represent the emerging themes and frequencies for agapao love. The analysis suggests that 63% of participants provided examples that organizational interests, bottom line, and productivity contribute to establishing a culture of high performance.

Table 5

Agapao Love Themes and Frequencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>% Based on N</th>
<th>Interview sources</th>
<th>Observation sources</th>
<th>Artifact sources</th>
<th>Frequency of reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Priority w/some leaders</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization interests/bottom line/productivity</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The N for interview participants = 8.
In addition, having this theme referenced 20 times in interviews, one of the higher frequencies in the study. The analysis also reveals that four of eight high school principals had agapao love set as a priority and suggest that it too contributes to establishing a culture of high performance with a frequency of 17. All frequencies were from interviews with zero references in observations or artifacts.

**Priority among leaders.** This theme was the second most frequently referenced for the construct of agapao love at 46%. The theme was referenced by 50% of the participants with a total of 17 frequencies. As a highly referenced theme, the respondents perceived that making agapao love a priority among leaders contributes to a culture of high performance. This is further illustrated through the lived experiences shared during the interviews of the participants.

Trends throughout this theme indicated that leaders do try to make agapao love a demonstrated priority in their work. Participant 5 stated, “I think that leaders in my organization strive to care for people more than the organization.” She further indicated
that she thinks that demonstrating agapao love positively impacts the culture of the organization.

Participant 2 indicated that agapao love is essential to building a positive culture within an organization. She further stated, “Within my corporation, most of my colleagues are or have a form of agapao love. As education is inherently nonlucrative, the purpose for pursuing a lifelong career in education then often becomes the love of the task.”

**Organizational interests, bottom line, and productivity.** This theme was the most frequently referenced for the theme of agapao love at 54%. The theme was referenced by 63% of the participants with a total of 20 frequencies. As the most highly referenced theme, respondents perceived that the organizational bottom line and productivity are often prioritized over agapao love, though agapao love is important. All participants believe that organizational interests and productivity contribute to a culture of high performance when accompanied by agapao love.

Trends throughout this theme indicate that productivity and the bottom line are prioritized within organizations. These priorities often compete with agapao love, while organizational leaders acknowledge the importance of agapao love. Participant 1 shared an example of how there can be a competition between prioritizing the people of the organization versus the bottom line. She stated, “Many organizations care about the bottom line. Unfortunately, when the bottom line becomes the main thing, then the people are not.”

Participant 6 further iterated the competing nature of loving culture and productivity. He stated, “The expressions of care and concern currently exist within the
culture of the organization but not to the extent that is supersedes or comes at the cost of the organization’s interest or productivity.” He continued,

The interest of the organization tends to be shaped by those in authority, which then becomes the interest of the organization. There exists a constant struggle to balance the needs of the organization with the needs of the individual or collective employee.

**Trust: Subquestion 5 Theme Results**

*What is the impact of the trust leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?*

Trust is the level of confidence that one individual has in another’s competence and that individual’s willingness to act in a fair, ethical, and predictable manner. Trust is essential to organizational culture; integrity and care for others are valued by the leader and followers (Joseph & Winston, 2005; Patterson, 2003). Findings from the interviews indicated that high school principals perceive that confronting issues and organizational transparency contribute to establishing a culture of high performance.

Table 6 and Figure 9 represent the prevailing themes and frequencies for trust. The analysis suggests that 88% (seven of eight) of the participants provided examples that a culture of trust with transparency contributes to establishing a culture of high performance. In addition, transparency was referenced 22 times in the interviews, the second highest frequency in the study. The analysis also reveals that five of the eight high school principals suggested that confronting and addressing issues contributes to establishing a culture of high performance with a frequency of 14. All frequencies were from interviews with zero references in observations or artifacts.
Table 6

Trust Themes and Frequencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>% Based on N</th>
<th>Interview sources</th>
<th>Observation sources</th>
<th>Artifact sources</th>
<th>Frequency of reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confront/address issues</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The N for interview participants = 8.

Figure 9. Trust themes and frequencies.

Transparency. This theme was the highest qualifying theme and was referenced for the construct of trust at 61%. It was referenced by 88% of participants with a frequency of 22. As the highest referenced theme, respondents perceived that the employ of transparency within the educational environment contributes to a culture of high performance. This was illustrated through lived experiences shared and observed during the interviews of the participants.

Study participants discussed why transparency is important and how it contributes to developing a culture of trust. Participant 8 discussed how trust comes about within
educational settings. He stated, “Trust in the leadership comes when a leader displays integrity, honor, and courage in decision-making and interactions with all stakeholders.”

Participant 7 further discussed the importance of transparency within the trust construct. Participant 7 shared how he facilitates building trust and transparency. He stated, “I build trust by letting the staff know my expectations and what they can expect from me. Then when an issue arises you do not deviate from your expectations. This builds trust with the staff.”

**Confront and address issues.** This theme was the second highest qualifying theme in the construct of trust and was referenced at 38%. It was referenced by 63% of the participants. This was a very highly referenced theme and participants perceived that confronting and addressing issues contributes to a culture of high performance. This was illustrated through the lived experiences shared and recorded during the interviews of the participants.

Participant 6 discussed trust within the organization and confronting issues. He discussed how building trust is essential and foundational in achieving organizational goals. He stated, “Trust-building is addressing issues that cut against the grain of the organization when they are small and limited in impact to the organization.”

Trends throughout this theme included calling out the issues along with demonstrating follow through. Participant 6 discussed trust building and communication as one of the issues with which he had been confronted. He stated,

Trust is developed in an organization through open, honest two-way communication that does not seek revenge and look for ulterior motives. Trust
building is setting up the structure within the organization that will facilitate conducting difficult conversation without fear and retribution.

In addition to confronting issues, the concern of follow through along with transparency was also a prevailing theme. Participant 2 indicated that listening and follow through are key factors to establishing and maintaining trust. In fact, Participant 2 stated, “If you are unable to follow through, you must be honest and state clearly as soon as possible what is happening and why you can’t.”

Altruism: Subquestion 3 Theme Results

What is the impact of the altruism leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?

Altruism is demonstrating unselfish concern for the welfare of another, even with a risk or sacrifice against one’s personal self-interest. It involves deriving personal pleasure from helping and seeking what’s best for others, often with an attitude of humility, modesty, and selflessness (DeYoung, 2000; Kaplan, 2000; Monroe, 1994; Patterson, 2003). Findings from the interviews indicated that high school principals perceive that student success and performance and relationships contribute to establishing a culture of high performance.

Table 7 and Figure 10 represent the prevailing themes and frequencies for altruism. The analysis suggests that 63% (five of eight) of the participants provided examples that a culture of altruism with student success and performance contributes to establishing a culture of high performance. In addition, student success and performance was referenced 18 times in the interviews, the highest frequency for this construct. The analysis also revealed that four of the eight high school principals suggested that
relationships that foster success contribute to establishing a culture of high performance with a frequency of 14. All frequencies were from interviews with zero references in observations or artifacts.

Table 7

_Altruism Themes and Frequencies_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>% Based on N</th>
<th>Interview sources</th>
<th>Observation sources</th>
<th>Artifact sources</th>
<th>Frequency of reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student success/performance</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships foster success</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The N for interview participants = 8.

Figure 10. Altruism themes and frequencies.

**Student success and performance.** This theme was referenced for the construct of altruism at 56%. The theme was referenced by 63% of the participants with a total of 18 frequencies. As a highly referenced theme, respondents perceived that student success and performance contribute to a culture of high performance. This was further illustrated
through the lived experiences shared and observed during the interviews of the participants.

Trends throughout this theme included comments about student success and its alignment with altruism. Participant 1 discussed how altruism has an overarching impact on student success. She stated that “true altruism from the community would actually allow us to redirect resources and serve the needs of a much larger part of our student population. The performance of more students would be supported and higher, broader achievement would result.”

Participant 8 discussed altruism in relation to the culture of school performance. He stated,

The culture of performance makes the difference between a good school and a great school. When the faculty understands and buys into the culture of high expectations and required success [not accepting less than the best] the results will lead the nonbelievers to the truth. Everyone learns that trying is not good enough—success is the only acceptable result.

**Relationships foster success.** This theme was referenced for the construct of altruism at 44%. The theme was referenced by 50% of the participants with a total of 14 frequencies. As a highly referenced theme, respondents perceived that relationships contribute to a culture of high performance. This was illustrated through the lived experiences shared during the participant interviews.

Trends throughout this theme included how care for the person transcends everything else. Participant 4 discussed the importance of care and concern toward students and their perceptions. She stated that “students don’t really care what we know
until they know we care. So when students believe that we are just as concerned about their social/mental well-being, we build relationships that reach beyond the academics of education. “

Participant 8 discussed how altruism has an impact on student performance. He stated,

Altruism has a large impact on student performance. Our belief that success breeds success is an example of altruism when teachers put concern for the success of their students ahead of the grading process. An altruistic teacher sees the value of success and puts all self-interest aside to build ever increasing instances of learning. Seeing students succeed brings joy to teachers.

Service: Subquestion 7 Theme Results

What is the impact of the service leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?

Service is the moral equivalent of giving of oneself to serve others. It implies that leaders are focused on placing their interest on others rather than on themselves. It can be demonstrated through the gift of time, energy, compassion, care, or belongings. Service places others first (Patterson, 2003; Russell & Stone, 2002). Findings from the interviews indicated that high school principals perceived that staff health and well-being and increased community activity contribute to establishing a culture of high performance.

Table 8 and Figure 11 represent the emerging themes and frequencies for service. The analysis suggests that 50% (four of eight) of the participants provided examples that a culture of service with staff health and well-being contributes to establishing a culture
of high performance. In addition, staff health and well-being was referenced 12 times in the interviews. The analysis also reveals that four of the eight high school principals suggested that increased community activity contributes to establishing a culture of high performance with a frequency of 9. All frequencies were from interviews with zero references in observations or artifacts.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>% Based on N</th>
<th>Interview sources</th>
<th>Observation sources</th>
<th>Artifact sources</th>
<th>Frequency of reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff health &amp; well-being</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity increases community well-being</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The N for interview participants = 8.

Figure 11. Service themes and frequencies.

**Staff health and well-being.** This theme was referenced for the construct of service at 57%. The theme was referenced by 50% of the participants with a total of 12
frequencies. As a highly referenced theme, respondents perceived that staff health and well-being contribute to a culture of high performance. This was illustrated through the lived experiences shared and observed during the interviews of the participants.

Trends throughout this theme included leaders making sacrifices for others and leaders looking out to help others. The trends reflect school leaders making decisions based on what is best for the greater good. Participant 7 described how he observed the actions of another principal. He stated,

He is always giving of himself to serve others. He handles school-based decisions based on what is best for his staff. Many times I have seen him base his decision on what is best not for his interest but what is best for the school.

**Activity increases community well-being.** This theme was referenced for the construct of service at 43%. The theme was referenced by 50% of participants with a total of 9 frequencies. As a highly referenced theme, respondents perceive that activity increases community well-being contributes to a culture of high performance. This was illustrated through the lived experiences shared during the interviews of participants.

Trends in this theme discuss how involvement in community activities enhance community well-being and align with a culture of high performance. Participant 5 stated, “Our organization is focused on the well-being of our entire community. We offer trainings to students, staff and families to help with the overall well-being of our community.”

**Humility: Subquestion 2 Results**

*What is the impact of the humility leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?*
Humility is the importance of being humble and having modesty, not being mistaken for meekness or the absence of strength. It is a virtue characterized by one’s own talents and abilities and an outward rejection of self-interest while placing true value on the recognition and success of others (Kim, Danseruau, Kim, & Kim, 2004). Findings from the interviews indicated that high school principals perceive that admission of failing and division of labor contribute to establishing a culture of high performance.

Table 9 and Figure 12 represent the prevailing themes and frequencies for humility. The analysis suggests that 50% (four of eight) of the participants provided examples that a culture of humility with admission of failing contributes to establishing a culture of high performance. In addition, admission of failing was referenced 10 times in the interviews. The analysis also reveals that four of eight high school principals suggested that division of labor contributes to establishing a culture of high performance with a frequency of 7. All frequencies were from interviews with zero references in observations or artifacts.

Table 9

*Humility Themes and Frequencies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>% Based on N</th>
<th>Interview sources</th>
<th>Observation sources</th>
<th>Artifact sources</th>
<th>Frequency of reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admit failing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Division of labor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The *N* for interview participants = 8.
**Admit failing.** This theme was equally as high as the other identified theme. It was referenced for the construct of humility at 58%. It was referenced by 50% of participants with a frequency of 10. As a highly referenced theme, respondents perceived that admitting failure contributes to a culture of high performance. This was illustrated through the lived experiences shared and observed during the interviews of the participants.

Trends throughout this theme included admit failing and admit making errors to show humility with your team. Participant 5 stated,

I believe that part of being humble is being able to share your failings as a leader. After reflecting, I approached the staff member, admitted my error and asked for forgiveness. I think it was a bit surprising to the staff member but was well-received.
**Division of labor.** This theme was referenced for the construct of humility at 41% by all eight participants. The frequency of this theme in interviews was 7 and 1 for artifacts. Artifacts include a memo about shared responsibilities among team members. As a highly referenced theme, respondents perceived that division of labor contributes to a culture of high performance. This was illustrated through the lived experiences shared and observed during the interviews of the participants and artifacts collected.

Trends throughout this theme included sharing duties and helping others without judgement. Participant 3 stated,

My administrative assistant was feeling overwhelmed with her workload but doing her best to balance it all without complaining or doing subpar work. I offered to help with greeting parents, facilitating the enrollment packet drop offs, and creating a follow-up checklist.

**Summary**

Chapter IV examined the data analysis and findings of the research conducted to address the research questions of the perceived impact Patterson’s (2003) servant leadership constructs had on establishing a culture of high performance. Patterson’s servant leadership constructs include agapao love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service. Data collection for this phenomenological study captured the lived experiences of eight high school principals through the employ of semistructured interviews, observations, and the collection of artifacts. Fifteen themes emerged after data were coded. The following section provides a summary of the findings.
Key Findings for Agapao Love

Agapao love was the third highest referenced construct in this study with 37 references or 16% of the total references made in the study. Two themes emerged from this construct and are described as follows:

1. *A priority with leaders* was referenced by 50% of the participants. This theme yielded 17 references in the construct of agapao love and yielded 46% of the data coded.
2. *Organizational interests/bottom line/productivity* was referenced by 63% of the participants. This theme yielded 20 references, which represented 54% of the data coded in the construct of agapao love.

When analyzing the data collected, the findings showed that high school principals perceived that the construct of agapao love impacts establishing a culture of high performance.

Key Findings for Humility

Humility was the lowest referenced construct in this study with 17 references or 7% of the total references made in the study. Two themes emerged and are described as follows:

1. *Admit failing* was referenced by 50% of the participants. This theme yielded the highest number of references in the construct of humility and yielded 58% of the data coded.
2. *Division of labor* was referenced by 50% of the participants and represented 41% of the data coded in the construct of humility.
When analyzing the data collected, the findings showed that high school principals perceived that the construct of humility impacts establishing a culture of high performance.

**Key Findings for Altruism**

Altruism was the third lowest ranking construct in the study with 32 references or 14% of the total references made in the study. Two themes emerged and are described as follows:

1. *Student success and performance* was referenced by 63% of the participants. This theme yielded the highest number of references in the construct of altruism and yielded 56% of the data coded.

2. *Relationships foster success* was referenced by 50% of the participants and represented 43% of the data coded for the construct of altruism.

When analyzing the data collected, the findings showed that high school principals perceived that the construct of altruism impacts establishing a culture of high performance.

**Key Findings for Vision**

Vision was the second highest referenced construct in this study with 43 references or 18% of the total references made in the study. Two themes emerged and are described as follows:

1. *Direction and guidance* was referenced by 63% of the participants and yielded 44% of the data coded.
2. *Share common goals* was referenced by 100% of the participants. This theme yielded the highest number of references in the construct of vision and yielded 56% of the data coded.

When analyzing the data collected, the findings showed that high school principals perceived that the construct of altruism impacts establishing a culture of high performance.

**Key Findings for Trust**

Trust was the fourth highest referenced construct in this study with 36 references or 15% of the total references made in the study. Two themes emerged and are described as follows:

1. *Confront and address issues* was referenced by 63% of the participants and represented 38% of the data coded for the construct of trust.

2. *Transparency* was referenced by 88% of participants. This theme yielded the highest number of references in the construct of trust and yielded 61% of the data coded.

When analyzing the data collected, the findings showed that high school principals perceived that the construct of trust impacts establishing a culture of high performance.

**Key Findings for Empowerment**

Empowerment was the highest referenced construct in this study with 47 references or 20% of the total references made in the study. Three themes emerged and are described as follows:

1. *Inclusive* was referenced by 75% of the participants and represented 32% of the data coded for the construct of empowerment.
2. *Experiment/creative* was referenced by 88% of participants. This theme yielded the highest number of references in the construct of empowerment and yielded 40% of the data coded.

3. *Shared decision-making* was referenced by 63% of participants and represented 28% of data coded for the construct of empowerment.

When analyzing the data collected, the findings showed that high school principals perceived that the construct of empowerment impacts establishing a culture of high performance.

**Key Findings for Service**

Service was the second lowest referenced construct in the study with 21 references or 9% of the total references made in the study. Two themes emerged and are described as follows:

1. *Staff health and well-being* was referenced by 50% of participants. This theme yielded the highest number of references in the construct of service and represented 57% of data coded for the construct of service.

2. *Increased community activity* was referenced by 50% of the participants and represented 43% of the data coded for the construct of service.

When analyzing the data collected, the findings showed that high school principals perceived that the construct of service impacts establishing a culture of high performance.

Chapter V engages a more detailed discussion about the findings. It also highlights expected and unexpected findings. In addition, Chapter V discusses the implications for action. It also includes recommendations for future research. Chapter V concludes with a section on final remarks and reflection.
CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

This final chapter, Chapter V, presents a summary of findings from this comprehensive phenomenological study. Chapter V contains a restatement of the purpose statement, central research question, subquestions, and research methodology. This chapter also contains a description of the population and the study participants. It continues with a detailed description of the study’s major findings, unexpected findings, and conclusions for each of the seven servant leadership constructs (Patterson, 2003): agapao love, humility, altruism, trust, empowerment, vision, and service. The chapter closes with the implications for action, recommendations for future research, concluding remarks, and reflections shared by the researchers.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore and describe high school principals’ perceived impact of the seven servant leadership constructs established by Patterson (2003) on establishing a culture of high performance.

Research Questions

The research question and subquestions were devised to study the perceived impact of Patterson’s (2003) servant leadership constructs on establishing a culture of high performance. The questions are as follows:

Central Question

What is the impact of Patterson’s (2003) seven servant leadership constructs on establishing a culture of high performance as perceived by high school principals?
Subquestions

1. What is the impact of the agapao love leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?
2. What is the impact of the humility leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?
3. What is the impact of the altruism leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?
4. What is the impact of the vision leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?
5. What is the impact of the trust leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?
6. What is the impact of the empowerment leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?
7. What is the impact of the service leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?

Methodology

The thematic group of nine researchers decided to utilize the qualitative phenomenological method to study servant leadership characters based on seven constructs: agapao love, service, humility, altruism, trust, vision, and empowerment. The researchers used the same methodology across a diversified group of educators within K-12 public education. Researchers interviewed eight school leaders in each of their research fields. A common research design was constructed and utilized in order for the
a thematic team to gather wide-sweeping patterns of servant leadership practices demonstrated by school leaders.

The researcher collected data from eight high school principals from eight different schools within Riverside County by conducting semistructured interviews via Zoom. A 15-day time frame was allotted for data collection for this study. The researcher made phone contact with each participant and sent an e-mail to each participant to provide information about the study as well as a summary defining servant leadership and facets of the study, the seven constructs of servant leadership (agapao love, humility, altruism, vision, empowerment, trust, and service; Appendix C). The researcher conducted the interviews using Zoom due to a public health emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The interview process consisted of the use of a uniform set of fixed interview questions to be asked of all participants (Patton, 2002). The time allotted for each interview was 45 minutes and was sufficient for completion for all participants.

The researcher utilized NVivo as a tool to code the data and provide a more efficient final analysis of the data. NVivo software allowed the researcher to classify, sort, and arrange information, examine relationships in the data, and combine analysis with linking, shaping, searching, and modeling. NVivo also helped the researcher to identify the themes with similar responses. After the analysis was completed, the researcher identified the similarities and differences in the themes that surfaced.

Each of the researchers involved in the thematic study, nine doctoral students led by two faculty chairs, used the same criteria to identify a study sample of eight educational leaders within their prospective target population. These target populations
included high school principals who worked at comprehensive high schools in Riverside County, California. All potential study participants needed to exhibit at least four of the five characteristics that follow that distinguished them as exemplary high school leaders:

1. The principal has been employed at a current high school within Riverside County with a minimum of 50 staff members.
2. The principal participant possesses a minimum of 2 or 3 years of experience at their current site.
3. The principal has a minimum of 5 years of experience in the K-12 profession.
4. The principal possesses membership in professional associations in their field, such as ACSA.
5. The principal has authored articles, paper, or materials written, published, or presented at conferences or association meetings.

**Population**

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the population is a group of elements or cases—whether individuals, objects, or events—that conform to what the researchers intend to generalize the results of the research. The population for this phenomenological study was high school principals in California. For the purpose of this study, high school principals serve students Grades 9 through 12 in the state of California. The population for this study was 1,322 high school principals in the state of California per the California Department of Education (n.d.) website.

**Sampling Frame**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) used the term sampling frame to describe a smaller subgroup of individuals who met the specified criteria for the study. It would not
have been a plausible goal for the researcher to use all 1,322 school principals in the state of California because of physical distance, access, and logistics. The sampling frame was chosen in order to create a more convenient sample for the researcher. This sampling frame included high school principals working in high-performing schools in Riverside County, California. There are 73 high schools in Riverside County, California. This study focuses on high school principals within Riverside County, California, who are leaders of high-performing schools and who met criteria established by the thematic team to participate in the study. Seventy-three principals met the sampling frame criterion representing 23 districts. The county of Riverside was chosen because of its proximity to the researcher (see Figure 3, repeated here for ease of reference).

![Diagram: Population, Sampling Frame, Sample]

Figure 3. Summary of the population, sampling frame, and sample.

This phenomenological study focused on how high school principals perceived the importance of Patterson’s (2003) seven constructs of servant leadership in creating a
culture of high performance. The researcher employed purposive sampling to select the sample of study participants, eight high school principals. In order to select the sample, participants were chosen from schools that had documented and demonstrated growth over the past 2 years in two state and local indicators (i.e., academic achievement and attendance), as documented by the California School Dashboard (n.d.). The study participants also met the criteria aforementioned.

In this study, eight high school principals were selected from the 73 high school principals within Riverside County identified by the California Department of Education. The researcher used purposive sampling in order to select the participants to participate in this study. The researcher deemed purposive sampling the most appropriate sampling method. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), “Selection of person for in-depth interviews begins with a description of the desired attributes or profiles of persons who would have knowledge of the topic” (p. 443).

**Demographic Data**

Eight public high school principals who met the established criteria were selected to participate in the study. In order to maintain participant confidentiality, each participant was assigned a number based on the date that they agreed to participate in the study. The interviews were subsequently conducted in the same numeric order. As a result, demographic data were reported without revealing the data of any study participant. All eight public high school principals were employed in Riverside County, California. Participants included four male and four female principals. Years of educational experience ranged from 19 to 26 years while years as a high school principal
ranged from 7 to 18 years. Table 10 represents the demographics of the eight public high school principals who participated in the study.

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study participant</th>
<th>Min 5 years in profession</th>
<th>Leading successful organizations</th>
<th>Publications</th>
<th>Recognition by peers</th>
<th>Member in professional organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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Study Participant Criteria

According to the California School Dashboard (n.d.), a high school with a culture of high performance is characterized by growth trends over the past 2 years in two of the four areas: English language arts, mathematics, suspension rate, and graduation rate. Qualified participants led schools with cultures that also exhibited high performance as evidenced by scores in the blue or green category for 2 years in a row, as indicated by the California Dashboard in two of the four areas of English language arts, mathematics, suspension rate, and graduation rate. The final requirements for study participants were that they had served a minimum of 2 years in the profession, had formed strong relationships with staff, had experience leading successful organizations, had publications within the world of education, had been recognized formally as a successful leader, and had been a member of an organization such as the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA).
Major Findings

This study’s central question was responded to through the analysis of the study’s subquestions. The findings were substantiated by benchmarks used to evaluate the percentages of references for each theme. The themes that were referenced by at least 50% the high school principal study participants and those that represented at least 20% of all references within each of the seven servant leadership constructs were labeled a major finding in the study. There were 15 major research findings that emerged from the analysis of the data. The major themes were developed from the data as well as from the collection of eight artifacts and seven observations. Chapter IV presented an analysis of the data that emerged related to the themes associated with the seven servant leadership constructs. The sections that follow address the central research question, the constructs, and the associated major findings. The data that were analyzed in Chapter IV and the literature review of Chapter II supported these major findings.

Central Research Question

What is the impact of Patterson’s (2003) seven servant leadership constructs for establishing a culture of high performance as perceived by high school principals?

Virtual interviews with eight high school principals were employed to collect qualitative data to respond to the question regarding the impact of the seven servant leadership constructs on establishing a culture of high performance. After schools with a perceived culture of high performance were identified by the researcher, peer-designed and reviewed interviews were completed using semistructured interviews with scripted open-ended guided questions developed by the thematic team of researchers. The eight high school principals identified to participate in the study were asked about Patterson’s
seven servant leadership constructs and how they facilitated creating a culture of high performance. All seven servant leadership constructs were investigated in the study: agapao love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service. The major findings for this study are presented in the data, which constitutes input from each individual participant regarding the research questions, which are directly aligned with each of the seven servant leadership constructs developed.

**Empowerment**

*What is the impact of the empowerment leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?*

**Major Finding 1: Creativity/experiment/risk taking.** Creativity, experimenting, and risk-taking was referenced by 88% of the participants. This construct yielded the highest number of references at 47 and represents 40% of the data related to the empowerment leadership construct. This major finding on encouraging creativity and risk taking to establish a culture of high performance was supported by the data from the analysis of the interview transcripts, literature review validation discussed in Chapter II, and participant statements provided in Chapter IV that supported the importance of empowering through creativity and experimental exercises. The work of Hammond (2018) supported the findings as he shows how the ability for staff to have autonomy, opportunity to take risks, and grow allows for improving the overall functionality and success of the organization. School leaders empower through allowing creativity to give their staff the opportunity to discover their potential and limitations (Balyer et al., 2017).

**Major Finding 2: Inclusiveness.** Inclusiveness was referenced by 75% of the participants and represents 32% of the data related to the empowerment servant
leadership construct. This major finding on encouraging inclusiveness to establish a
culture of high performance was supported by the data from the analysis of interview
transcripts, literature review validation discussed in Chapter II, and participant statements
provided in Chapter IV that support the importance of inclusiveness in leadership. The
work of Hammond (2018) supported these findings as she found that staff empowerment
was positively affected by school leaders who demonstrate servant leadership and involve
staff in policy making and processes. The need was for all levels of stakeholders to feel a
vital part of fundamental discussions and processes in order to maintain a productive and
positive culture.

**Major Finding 3: Decision-making.** This theme was referenced by 63% of the
participants and represents 28% of the data related to the empowerment servant
leadership construct. This major finding on encouraging decision-making to establish a
culture of high performance was supported by the data from the analysis of interview
transcripts, literature review validation discussed in Chapter II, and participant statements
provided in Chapter IV that supported the importance of establishing shared decision-
making. The work of Hammond (2018) supported these findings as he focused on how
shared decision-making draws all levels of organizations in for buy-in, collaboration, and
growth. The need to be able to participate in monumental discussions, decision-making,
and policy making helps to create successful teams that demonstrate buy-in and
cohesiveness.

**Vision**

*What is the impact of the vision leadership construct on establishing a culture of
high performance?*
Major Finding 4: Shared common goals. Shared common goals was referenced by 100% of the participants. This construct yielded the highest number of references at 43 and represents 56% of the data related to the vision leadership construct. This major finding on encouraging shared common goals to establish a culture of high performance was supported by the data from the analysis of the interview transcripts, literature review validation discussed in Chapter II, and participant statements provided in Chapter IV that supported the importance of establishing vision through shared common goals. The work of Jensen, Moynihan, and Salomonsen (2018) supported the findings as they showed how the presence of a shared direction and shared goals contribute to the success of the educational organization. Jensen et al. discussed how the developed and shared goals improve performance because they have meaningful purpose and significance to stakeholders.

Major Finding 5: Direction and guidance. This theme was referenced by 63% of the participants representing 44% of the data related to the vision servant leadership construct. This major finding on encouraging direction and guidance to establish a culture of high performance was supported by the data from the analysis of interview transcripts, literature review validation discussed in Chapter II, and the participant statements provided in Chapter IV that supported the importance of establishing vision employing direction and guidance.

The work of Davidson and Butcher (2019) supported these findings as he discussed how establishing structures within the organization allow for self-directing and self-control while promoting the materialization of the established vision.
Agapao Love

*What is the impact of the agapao love leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?*

**Major Finding 6: Organizational interests, bottom line, or productivity.**
Organizational interests and productivity were referenced by 63% of the participants. This construct yielded the highest number of references at 20 and represents 54% of the data related to the agapao love servant leadership construct. This major finding on encouraging organizational interests, bottom line and productivity to establish a culture of high performance was supported by the data from the analysis of interview transcripts, literature review validation discussed in Chapter II, and participant statements provided in Chapter IV that supported the importance of establishing a culture of agapao love to sustain organizational interests and productivity. The work of Brouns et al. (2020) supported the findings as they showed how organizational interests and productivity were supported when servant leaders demonstrated compassionate love, which centers on the good of the other, and the talent of the employee is manifested and yields higher levels of productivity. This practice also provokes the ideas and willingness of staff to collaborate and promote the will of the greater good. (Brouns et al., 2020)

**Major Finding 7: Priority with some leaders.** This theme was referenced by 50% of the participants and represents 46% of the data related to the agapao love servant leadership construct. This major finding on encouraging agapao love as a priority with some leaders to establish a culture of high performance was supported by the data from the analysis of interview transcripts, literature review validation discussed in Chapter II, and participant statements provided in Chapter IV that supported the importance of
establishing agapao love as a priority among leaders. The work of Peterlin, Pearse, and Dimovski (2015) supported these findings as they discussed that leaders who prioritize agapao love operate with a goal of providing healing and understanding to those on the team. Such leaders assert that goals exist for the empowerment of the worker through care and love.

Trust

What is the impact of the trust leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?

Major Finding 8: Transparency. Transparency was referenced by 88% of the participants. This construct yielded the highest references at 22 and 61% of the data related to the trust servant leadership construct. This major finding on encouraging transparency to establish a culture of high performance was supported by the data from the analysis of interview transcripts, literature review validation discussed in Chapter II, and participant statements provided in Chapter IV that supported the importance of establishing transparency. The work of Babaoglan (2016) supported the findings as he discussed how openness and transparency affect levels of trust within schools. Babaoglan (2016) further asserted that openness creates the organizational climate, professionalism, authenticity, and cooperation among team members, which also creates a positive culture and climate of trust. As an educational leader, I have found it to be true that transparency has a great impact on creating a climate of trust and creating relationships.

Major Finding 9: Confront and address issues. This theme was referenced by 63% of the participants and represents 38% of the data related to the trust servant
leadership construct. This major finding on encouraging confronting and addressing issues to establish a culture of high performance was supported by the data from the analysis of interview transcripts, literature review validation discussed in Chapter II, and participant statements provided in Chapter IV that supported the importance of confronting and addressing issues. The work of Kars and Inandi (2018) supported these findings as they found that democratic leaders with a willingness to address issues in collaboration with others has a positive influence on building a culture of trust. They discussed the ability of staff to address the issues at hand as a significant predictor of building trust (Kars & Inandi, 2018). The ability to be direct in one’s approach and forthright in problem-solving supported building a culture of trust and enhanced team cohesiveness.

Altruism

*What is the impact of the altruism leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?*

**Major Finding 10: Student success and performance.** Student success and performance was referenced by 63% of the participants. This construct yielded the highest references at 32 and represents 56% of the data related to the altruism servant leadership construct. This major finding on encouraging student success and performance to establish a culture of high performance was supported by the data from the analysis of interview transcripts, literature review validation discussed in Chapter II, and participant statements provided in Chapter IV that supported the importance of establishing a climate of student success and performance. The work of Warin (2017) supported the findings by discussing the importance of how students should not only be academically engaged and
competent, but also how being loving and caring fosters student success and performance. Leaders who demonstrate altruistic behaviors sometimes break the traditional lines of discipline and educational policy but promote a loving environment that contributes to student success and performance.

**Major Finding 11: Relationships foster success.** This theme was referenced by 50% of the participants and represents 44% of the data related to the altruism servant leadership construct. This major finding on encouraging relationships to foster success to establish a culture of high performance was supported by the data from the analysis of interview transcripts, literature review validation discussed in Chapter II, and participant statements provided in Chapter IV that supported the importance of how servant leadership behaviors influence building positive relationships that foster success. The work of Ekinci (2015) supported these findings by asserting that leaders who focus on building relationships with their followers and tending to their needs grow as a leader and foster the success of team and students.

**Service**

*What is the impact of the service leadership construct on establishing a culture of high performance?*

**Major Finding 12: Staff health and well-being.** Staff health and well-being was referenced by 50% of participants. This construct yielded 12 references and represents 57% of the data related to the service servant leadership construct. This major finding on encouraging staff health and well-being to establish a culture of high performance was supported by the data from the analysis of interview transcripts, literature review validation discussed in Chapter II, and participant statements provided in Chapter IV that
supported the importance of establishing staff health and well-being. The work of Hung et al. (2016) supported the findings as they showed how creating a culture of service and leaders provides “regretless service,” meaning the principal promotes selfless contributions that promote staff well-being. Leaders who serve their staff members contribute to the overall well-being by being willing to assist.

**Major Finding 13: Activities increase community well-being.** This theme was referenced by 50% of participants and represents 43% of data related to the service servant leadership construct. This major finding on encouraging activities that increase community well-being to establish a culture of high performance was supported by the data from the analysis of interview transcripts, literature review validation discussed in Chapter II, and participant statements provided in Chapter IV that supported the importance of activities that increase community well-being. The work of Black (2010) supported these findings by discussing the importance of service by the leader of the organization and how such service impacts not only the schools but the community at large. The servant leader’s engagement with community promotes community well-being as well.

**Humility**

*What is the impact of the humility leadership characteristics on establishing a culture of high performance?*

**Major Finding 14: Admit failing.** Admission of failure was referenced by 50% of the participants. This construct yielded 10 references at 58% of the data related to the humility servant leadership construct. This major finding on encouraging admitting failing to establish a culture of high performance was supported by the data from the
analysis of interview transcripts, literature review validation discussed in Chapter II, and participant statements provided in Chapter IV that supported the importance of admission of failure. The work of Winston (2002) supported the findings as Winston showed how the admission of failure by leaders positively impacts culture and the success of all within the organization. Winston discussed that servant leaders, in order to be effective, should steer away from self-aggrandizement and self-glorification in order to support the virtue of humility.

**Major Finding 15: Division of labor.** This theme was referenced by 50% of the participants and represents 41% of data related to the humility servant leadership construct. This major finding on encouraging division of labor to establish a culture of high performance was supported by the data from the analysis of interview transcripts, literature review validation discussed in Chapter II, and participant statements provided in Chapter IV that supported the importance of the division of labor demonstrated by servant leaders. The work of Sousa and van Dierendonck (2015) supported these findings by discussing the importance of the division of labor by the leader of the organization. Sousa and van Dierendonck (2015) discussed how servant leaders should share responsibility by taking on the responsibilities and duties of others within the organization.

**Unexpected Findings**

The research found two unexpected findings related to the seven servant leadership constructs: (a) the overall impact of the humility leadership construct and (b) the impact of the service leadership construct. The researcher discovered that of the seven constructs, the humility construct with 17 references and 7% of the coded data
displayed the least amount of impact among the servant leadership constructs. This was unexpected by the researcher because effective leadership is characterized by the exhibition of humility. Showing humility as a school leader is critical for one to be deemed effective, caring, collaborative, and results oriented. Perhaps these study participants did not prioritize humility in their leadership roles while they did understand it to be important. All study participants were aware of the importance of demonstrating humility and its overall impact.

The second unexpected finding was for service leadership. This finding supported the impact of the service leadership construct with 21 frequencies and 9% of the data coded for the seven servant leadership constructs. This theme also demonstrated room for improvement and growth. The humility and the service leadership constructs were unexpected findings because they were prioritized and mentioned less frequently than all others in the participant interviews. Therefore they manifested with lower frequencies in the data analysis.

**Conclusions**

The researcher was able to draw several conclusions from the findings of this study and the literature that supported it. The conclusions illustrate how high school principals applied Patterson’s (2003) seven servant leadership constructs to establish a culture of high performance. The conclusion arose directly from the analysis of data in Chapter IV, which delineated how each of the seven constructs (agapao love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service) contributed to how high school principals established cultures of high performance within the educational arena.
Conclusion 1: Construct Alignment

After careful analysis of the data findings from the research and the literature, the researcher concluded that Patterson’s (2003) seven servant leadership constructs (agapao love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service) set the foundation to influence the execution of behaviors for high school principals to establish a culture of high performance at their schools. The research indicated that high school principals who engaged in the practice and application of all of the seven servant leadership constructs with fidelity were able to successfully create a culture of high performance at their respective school sites. Spears (2010) characterizes servant leaders with the attributes that foster community and success: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and community building. Hayes (2008) asserted that the practice of these servant leader characteristics can “make a profound difference on the impact of learning and in the learning experience of both students and teachers” (p. 113).

Conclusion 2: Empowerment Is Essential

Based on the findings from the research and the literature, the researcher concluded that high school principals who empower all stakeholders will maximize outcomes for everyone involved. Most specifically, effective leaders demonstrating servant leadership qualities must empower their teachers. Balyer et al. (2017) suggested that school leaders who empower their staff members provide them opportunities for shared decision-making, improving status, and building relationships on principles of trust. He asserted that administrators should empower teachers by supporting their professional development, developing their self-efficacy, supporting their autonomy, and
creating leadership opportunities. Such empowerment encourages risk-taking and self-
accountability to accomplish tasks and work toward organizational goals (Blanchard, 2000).

**Conclusion 3: Relationships Are Essential in Education**

Based on findings from the research and the literature, the researcher concluded that a culture of high performance is established in high schools where principals prioritize building and maintaining healthy relationships. Relationships between staff and leadership, staff and students, and staff and community are foundational to having a positive effect on student performance and student learning. According to Tassione and Inlay (2014), when students experience close relationships and nurturing with peers and teachers, their sense of identity is enhanced, they make contributions to their school community and beyond, they grow personally, they are motivated to learn intrinsically, and they achieve academic success. According to Donohue (2020), staff members who prioritize staff relationships experience huge gains in trust, respect, and collaboration, which result in academic gains for students.

**Conclusion 4: Genuine Care for Others**

Based on findings from the research and the literature, the researcher concluded that high school principals who exhibit genuine care for all students, staff, and educational stakeholders in order to create a culture of high performance on the school campus demonstrate care for others through compassionate love. Such love and care are required to promote growth and change (Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). Furthermore, a servant leader who demonstrates love, care, and concern for others can transform staff and student climate (Powles, 2006).
Conclusion 5: Spirit of Service Is Foundational

Based on the findings from the research and the literature, the researcher concluded that having a spirit of service is foundational for high school principals establishing a culture of high performance at their school sites. Black (2010) asserted that a servant leader demonstrates a spirit of service by providing service with a focus on those being served becoming more competent. He discussed the idea that a servant leader is committed to doing what is necessary to improve the work environment. A servant leader working to be a change agent and foster a culture of high performance is willing to provide regretless service and be the change needed for his staff in order to promote success (Hung et al., 2016). Servant leaders don’t stop until the needs of all have been attended to. Servant leaders are selfless in their actions and ensure that all stakeholders are considered. Servant leaders don’t make themselves a priority, instead the needs of others are prioritized for the good of the group and organization.

Implications for Action

The prior conclusions suggest a need for implications for action. A culture of high performance is created on a school campus when a connection of all seven servant leadership constructs is applied by site leaders. In general, research affirmed the independent influence of each construct. This study lent credibility to the seven constructs and brought shared meaning to how site leaders worked to create a culture of high performance on their campuses using these seven constructs. The following are the researcher’s recommendations to address the conclusions derived from this study. The researcher also developed implications for action and included the responsible persons or groups for implementing the designated implications.
Implication 1

The thematic researchers who participated in this study using different K12 populations need to take action to disseminate key findings about the importance of the seven constructs for creating school cultures of high performance to K12 administrators. Individually or working together they need to publish scholarly articles for submission to educational publications. Peer-reviewed publications that feature research-based articles can aid in further professional growth and development of school administrators. Collaborative discourse regarding the particular research studies on the impact of servant leadership should be a part of publications such as *EdCal* and *Leadership Magazine* (ACSA), and *The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Newsletter* (ASCD).

Implication 2

School administrators who display the needed level of humility to lead others should first be molded and guided through the art of leadership with an understanding of servant leadership. School administrators should be provided coaching to teach and demonstrate servant leadership. Servant leadership constructs should added as foundational learning standards in the administrative services credential programs. The element of humility must be approached by all school administrators in order to not serve themselves but to be able to serve others. Humility is a virtue that is peaceful, and it rejects the self-glorification of self-aggrandizement as a reversal of social norms as it relates to serving others. The servant leadership construct should be their overall building block to becoming an administrator with humility being their approach to becoming a servant leader. Individuals who are humble seek more of a view or a picture that is
objective of their own inner and outer strength, capabilities, and limitations by thoroughly engaging in the lives of others and the environment of which they are a part (Sousa & van Dierendonck, 2017).

**Implication 3**

County Offices of Education and K12 school districts need to offer professional development opportunities for district and school site leaders regarding the importance of the seven servant leadership constructs (agapao love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service) and strategies to apply the seven constructs. The behaviors and attitudes of the principals who are servant leaders do have a positive effect on an organization’s process in regard to a worker’s commitment, dedication, and belonging. Being a high school principal who operates in a manner that focuses on increasing the effectiveness of others through the professional development of themselves can personify and model the necessary engagement needed to make the changes desired.

**Implication 4**

There must be a mandate developed to choose servant leaders as school administrators, particularly high school leaders who live their lives and govern accordingly by the seven servant leadership constructs (agapao love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service) as the initial measuring rod for recommendation to the position of school leader. Patterson (2003) stated that servant leadership is a virtuous theory that has a characteristic that is an additive to one’s soul and becomes part of the nature of a person who chooses to lead. This virtue or virtuous theory is internal and also spiritual because of the human spirit and the belief in the good in all that grows and can be nurtured in others to be their best person as well (Whetstone, 2002).
**Implication 5**

The high school principals need to be provided more professional development and research on the impact of servant leadership on creating effective schools and growing student achievement. High school principals should be provided direct coaching on how servant leadership impact student achievement. They should also be provided leadership strategies to support the employ of servant leadership constructs. The focus of the professional development and research should also be to provide training regarding the collective knowledge of the servant leaders for current and aspiring principals. This type of focus group of servant leadership educators could be very effective at speaking engagements, administrative service credential classes, and specific conferences that can be learning forums such as the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), the Center for Principal Leadership, and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP).

**Recommendations for Further Research**

The findings from this phenomenological study, based on Patterson’s (2003) seven servant leadership constructs (agapao love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, service) grounded the findings and conclusions for this study. Recommendations for further study of the seven servant leadership constructs are as follows:

**Recommendation 1**

The current study included eight high school principals from Riverside County, California, who employed their versions of Patterson’s (2003) seven servant leadership
constructs to create a culture of high performance. In order gain more insight into the impact of servant leadership constructs more universally, I recommend replication of the study at high schools statewide.

**Recommendation 2**

A comparative study should be conducted between high school principals and high school assistant principals within the state of California who have demonstrated adoption of Patterson’s (2003) seven servant leadership constructs, experienced development of a culture of high performance, and can substantiate such with California Dashboard results and criteria.

**Recommendation 3**

A study with a quantitative research design should be conducted to collect quantitative data about specific dashboard measures (i.e., ELA/math testing and attendance) to gain insight into the use of servant leadership constructs and the correlation to high levels of student performance. Findings could be substantiated in the data findings.

**Recommendation 4**

Conduct a comparative qualitative study using principals in high-performing schools and principals of low-performing schools based on assessment, attendance, and graduation rates to determine the impact of servant leadership on school culture related to student performance.

**Recommendation 5**

It is recommended that another thematic team engage a qualitative phenomenological study to investigate the impact of servant leadership on the culture of
high performance in high schools that serve underrepresented populations (i.e., Hispanics, Blacks) in urban settings.

Concluding Remarks and Reflections

From a personal perspective, I have always embraced a spirit of service and prefaced it with a priority to serving others whenever and wherever I can. Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, “What are you doing for others?” (Martin Luther King, Jr.). Service to others has always been fulfilling and rewarding to me in both my personal and professional lives. Service to others yields benefits to those rendering the service and those being served. It is for this reason that the thematic study focused on servant leadership and its impact to student performance was very intriguing to me.

As an educator, I was influenced early on in my career that it was better to serve. I was taught and mentored, by a phenomenal administrator, about the power of service in education to staff and students and its impact on a culture of high performance. As a new teacher, I began my career at a military school which embraced three core values:

- All students can learn and be successful.
- Adults create and maintain the environment for success.
- Success breeds success.

These core values, unbeknownst to me at the time, have been adopted as my core values in life and work. These core values ignited a spirit of service in me that I have yet to abandon. With adopting these values, I accepted service to students and staff as a primary role and duty to establish a culture of success in the classroom as well as at schools where I was honored to serve and lead. Such practice facilitated my ability to expand in my efficacy in collaboration, sharing best practices instructionally, developing
staff tools and practices, and ultimately making unprecedented gains in student achievement. Such gains were documented in student grades, behavior reports, attendance, graduation rates, and assessment as delineated on the California Dashboard. Adopting a spirit of service as a school leader was fortunately contagious in my tenure at various school sites. My willingness to serve fostered empowerment and collaboration, enhanced the use of technology in pedagogy, improved instructional strategies, heightened accountability with students and staff, and improved student performance where students owned their opportunities and achievements.

Operating as a servant leader at three different military academies, I am fortunate to share testimony of the impacts of a servant leader’s behavior creating a culture of high performance. What I learned as a member of this thematic team in this phenomenological study is that my experience was not an anomaly. Practice in exhibiting Patterson’s (2003) seven servant leadership constructs (agapao love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service) yields positive outcomes for the overall educational community, which includes students, staff, parents, and other stakeholders.
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## APPENDIX A

### Synthesis Matrix

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APPENDIX B

Thematic Servant Leadership Interview Questions

Directions:
I will be asking the interview questions below regarding the seven constructs of Servant Leadership based on Patterson’s (2003) theoretical framework. Please review the definitions and interview questions prior to our scheduled interview. You may want to print and have a hard copy to reference during the virtual interview.

Agapao
Agapao love is to do the right thing for the right reasons. Agapao love leaders care more for their followers than the interest of the organization resulting in greater understanding, gratitude, kindness, forgiveness, and compassion. (Gunn, B. 2002; Patterson, K. 2003)

Q1: What are your perceptions of the culture that exists in your organization resulting from Agapao Love?

Q2: What would you describe as the 2 or 3 most important ways to demonstrate Agapao Love?

Humility
Humility is the importance of being humble and having modesty, not being mistaken for meekness or the absence of strength. It is a virtue characterized by one’s own talents and abilities and an outward rejection of self-interest while placing true value on the recognition and success of others. (B. Kim et al., 1999)

Q1 - Tell me about a time where you put your staff and teachers needs before your own.

Q2 - Servant leaders are characterized by displaying humility towards the members of their organization. Tell me about a time when you showed humility towards your staff or a staff member?

Altruism
Altruism is demonstrating unselfish concern for the welfare of another, even with a risk or sacrifice against one’s personal self-interest. It involves deriving personal pleasure from helping and seeking what’s best for others, often with an attitude of humility, modesty, and selflessness. (DeYoung, R. 2000; Kaplan, S. 2000; Monroe, K. 1994; Patterson, K. 2003)

Q1: What is your perception of altruism and its impact on your organization's culture of high performance?
Q2: What do you believe are the specific impacts it has on the culture of performance in your organization?

Vision
A bridge from the present to the future created by a collaborative mindset, adding meaning to the organization, sustaining higher levels of motivation and withstanding challenges. (Kouzes & Posner, 2006, 2007; Landsberg, 2003; Mendez-Morse, 1993; Nanus, 1992)

Q1: How does the use of creating a vision in your leadership impact the establishment of a culture of high performance?

Q2: What behaviors or actions do you observe when vision is prioritized in school leadership?

Trust
Trust is the level of confidence that one individual has in another’s competence and his or her willingness to act in a fair, ethical, and predictable manner. Trust is essential to organizational culture; integrity and care for others are valued by the leader and followers.

Q1: There is a lot of literature on the importance of building a climate of trust within an organization. How do you develop and sustain trust in your organization?

Q2: Thinking about your organization, please share some examples of how trust has supported a culture of high performance?

Empowerment
Empowerment is entrusting power to others. Virtually giving away power to followers and allowing them to know and feel significant and important in their role and contribution. It requires effective listening, valuing love and equity, and an emphasis on teamwork. Empowerment encourages risk-taking and self-accountability to accomplish tasks and work toward goals. (Blanchard, K. 2000; Melrose, K. 1995; Patterson, K. 2003; Russell, R.F. & Stone, A.G. 2002).

Q1: How do you perceive empowerment in your organization?

Q2: Empowerment often encourages risk taking and self-accountability, please describe the opportunities you see staff having within your organization to utilize empowerment?

Service
Service is the moral equivalent of giving of oneself to serve others. It implies that leaders are focused on placing interest on others rather than on one’s own interest. It can be demonstrated through the gift of time, energy, compassion, care or belongings. Service places others first. (Patterson, K. 2003; Russell, R.F. & Stone, A.G.2002).
Q1: Please share some examples when you have witnessed service within your organization and how did that service impact the culture of high performance?

Q2: Describe a service that is provided in your organization and what do you believe is the impact of this service on the overall performance within the organization?
APPENDIX C

E-Mail to Participants

Invitation Letter to Participate

Date: xxxxxxxxxxxx

Dear Potential Study Participant:

I am a doctoral candidate at Brandman University completing research toward a doctorate degree in Organizational Leadership. I am conducting a study that will explore and describes human resource administrators’ perceived impact of Patterson’s seven servant leadership constructs on establishing a culture of high performance in public school districts in California.

I am asking for your assistance in the study by participating in a Zoom interview which will take from 45-60 minutes and will be set up at a time that is convenient for you. If you agree to participate in the interview and online survey, you will be assured that it will be completely confidential. No names will be attached to any notes or records from the interview or online survey. All information will remain in locked files accessible only to the researcher. No one from your school district will have access to the information obtained during the interview. You will be free to stop the interview and withdraw from the study at any time.

I am available to answer questions via telephone xxx-xxx-xxxxx or via email at lavvy4401@mail.brandman.edu, to answer any questions you may have.

Please email or call me if you are willing to consider being a part of this study. Your participation would be greatly valued.

Sincerely,

Angela Lawyer
Doctoral Candidate
Bradman University in Organizational Leadership
APPENDIX D

BUIRB Approval

From: "Institutional Review Board" <my@brandman.edu>
Subject: BUIRB Application Approved: Angela Lawyer
Date: January 8, 2021 at 10:29:36 AM PST
To: lawy4401@mail.brandman.edu
Cc: ddevore@brandman.edu, buirb@brandman.edu, amock@brandman.edu
Reply-To: webmaster@brandman.edu

Dear Angela Lawyer,

Congratulations! Your IRB application to conduct research has been approved by the Brandman University Institutional Review Board. Please keep this email for your records, as it will need to be included in your research appendix.

If you need to modify your BUIRB application for any reason, please fill out the "Application Modification Form" before proceeding with your research. The Modification form can be found at IRB.Brandman.edu

Best wishes for a successful completion of your study.

Thank You,

BUIRB
Academic Affairs
Brandman University
16355 Laguna Canyon Road
Irvine, CA 92618
buirb@brandman.edu
www.brandman.edu
A Member of the Chapman University System

This email is an automated notification. If you have questions please email us at buirb@brandman.edu.
APPENDIX E

Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMATION ABOUT: Servant Leadership: Patterson’s Seven Constructs and the Perceived Impact of High Principals on Establishing a Culture of High Performance.

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Angela Lawyer, MA

PURPOSE OF STUDY: You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Angela Lawyer, a doctoral student from the School of Education at Brandman University. The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore and describe public school district administrators’ perceived impact of Patterson’s seven servant leadership constructs on establishing a culture of high performance.

The interview(s) will last approximately 45 – 60 minutes and will be conducted in a one on one virtual interview setting using Zoom.

I understand that:

a) There are minimal risks associated with participating in this research. I understand that the Investigator will protect my confidentiality by keeping the identifying codes and research materials in a locked file drawer that is available only to the researcher.

b) I understand that the interview will be audio recorded. The recordings will be available only to the researcher. The audio recordings will be used to capture the interview dialogue and to ensure the accuracy of the information collected during the interview. All information will be identifier-redacted and my confidentiality will be maintained. Upon completion of the study all recordings will be destroyed. All other data and consents will be securely stored for three years after completion of data collection and confidentially shredded or fully deleted.

c) The possible benefit of this study to me is that my input may help add to the research regarding servant leadership and the impact it has on establishing a culture of high performance. The findings will be available to me at the conclusion of the study and will provide new insights about this study in which I participated. I understand that I will not be compensated for my participation.

d) If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact lawy4401@mail.brandman.edu or by phone at XXX-XXX-XXXX or Dr. Dong DeVore (Advisor) at ddevore@brandman.edu or Dr. Lisa Simon (Secondary Advisor) at lsimon2@brandman.edu.

e) My participation in this research study is voluntary. I may decide to not participate in the study and I can withdraw at any time. I can also decide not to answer particular questions during the interview if I so choose. I understand that I may refuse to participate or may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the Investigator may stop the study at any time.

f) No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent re-obtained. I understand that if I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor of
2) Academic Affairs, Brandman University, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the "Research Participant's B of Rights". I have read the above and understand it and hereby consent to the procedure(s) set forth.

________________________________________
Signature of Participant

________________________________________
Signature of Principal Investigator

________________________________________
Date
APPENDIX F

Brandman Bill of Rights

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Research Participant’s Bill of Rights

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.

2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.

3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.

4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.

5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.

6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.

7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.

8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.

9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.

10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the Brandman University Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The Brandman University Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.
APPENDIX G

Interview Protocol

Thematic Servant Leadership Interview Protocol-Draft

“My name is Angela Lawyer and I’m a doctoral candidate at Brandman University in the area of Organizational Leadership. I’m a part of a team conducting research to explore the ways high school principals perceive the impact these seven constructs (agapao love, humility, altruism, vision, trust, empowerment, and service) have on establishing a culture of high performance. We are seeking to better understand what it is that you do to build a culture of high performance within your high schools in Riverside County.

I want to thank you for agreeing to participate in the interview on servant leadership. The information you give, along with the others, hopefully will provide a clear picture of how superintendents establish a culture of high performance.

The questions I will be asking are the same for everyone participating in the study. The reason for this study is to try to guarantee, as much as possible, that my interviews with all participating principals will be conducted in the same manner.

Informed Consent

I would like to remind you that any information that is obtained in connection to this study will remain confidential. All of the data will be reported without reference to any individual(s) or any institution(s). For ease of our discussion and accuracy I will record our conversation as indicated in the Informed Consent sent to you via email. I will have the recording transcribed to a Word document and will send it to you via electronic mail so that you can check to make sure that I have accurately captured your thoughts and ideas. The digital recording will be erased.

Did you receive the Informed Consent and Brandman Bill of Rights I sent you via email? Do you have any questions or need clarification about either document? Do you consent to move forward with the interview?

We have scheduled an hour for the interview. At any point during the interview you may ask that I skip a particular question or stop the interview altogether.

Do you have any questions before we begin? Okay, let’s get started, and thanks so much for your time.

Agapao

Agapao love is to do the right thing for the right reasons. Agapao love leaders care more for their followers than the interest of the organization resulting in greater understanding, gratitude, kindness, forgiveness, and compassion. (Gunn, B. 2002; Patterson, K. 2003)

Sub-Question 1: What is the impact of the agapao leadership constructs on establishing a culture of high performance?

Q1: What are your perceptions of the culture that exists in your high school resulting from Agapao Love?
   **Probe:** Can you give examples of this?

Q2: What would you describe as the 2 or 3 most important ways to demonstrate Agapao Love?
Humility

Humility is the importance of being humble and having modesty, not being mistaken for meekness or the absence of strength. It is a virtue characterized by one’s own talents and abilities and an outward rejection of self-interest while placing true value on the recognition and success of others. (B. Kim et al., 1999)

Sub-Question 2: What is the impact of the humility leadership constructs on establishing a culture of high performance?

Q1 - Tell me about a time where you put your staff and teachers needs before your own.

Q2 - Servant leaders are characterized by displaying humility towards the members of their high school Tell me about a time when you showed humility towards your staff or a staff member?  
    Probe: How did this make you feel?

Altruism

Altruism is demonstrating unselfish concern for the welfare of another, even with a risk or sacrifice against one’s personal self-interest. It involves deriving personal pleasure from helping and seeking what’s best for others, often with an attitude of humility, modesty, and selflessness. (DeYoung, R. 2000; Kaplan, S. 2000; Monroe, K. 1994; Patterson, K. 2003)

Sub-Question 3: What is the impact of the altruism leadership constructs on establishing a culture of high performance?

Q1: What is your perception of altruism and its impact on your high school culture of high performance?

Q2: What do you believe are the specific impacts it has on the culture of performance in your high school  
    Probe: Can you give me an example of how altruism has impacted your high school culture of high performance?

Vision

A bridge from the present to the future created by a collaborative mindset, adding meaning to the organization, sustaining higher levels of motivation and withstanding challenge. (Kouzes & Posner, 2006, 2007; Landsberg, 2003; Mendez-Morse, 1993; Nanus, 1992)

Sub-Question 4: What is the impact of the vision leadership constructs on establishing a culture of high performance?

Q1: How does the use of creating a vision in your leadership impact the establishment of a culture of high performance?
**Probe:** Share examples of how your day-to-day management supports your vision for a culture of high performance.

Q2: What behaviors or actions do you observe when vision is prioritized in school leadership?

**Trust**

Trust is the level of confidence that one individual has in another’s competence and his or her willingness to act in a fair, ethical, and predictable manner. Trust is essential to organizational culture; integrity and care for others are valued by the leader and followers.

**Sub-Question 5:** What is the impact of the trust leadership constructs on establishing a culture of high performance?

Q1: There is a lot of literature on the importance of building a climate of trust within a high school. How do you develop and sustain trust in your organization?

Q2: Thinking about your high school, please share some examples of how trust has supported a culture of high performance?

**Probe:** You have shared some ways you develop and sustain trust. Are there 2-3 key leadership behaviors for developing a climate of trust?

**Empowerment**

Empowerment is entrusting power to others. Virtually giving away power to followers and allowing them to know and feel significant and important in their role and contribution. It requires effective listening, valuing love and equity, and an emphasis on teamwork. Empowerment encourages risk-taking and self-accountability to accomplish tasks and work toward goals. (Blanchard, K. 2000; McRose, K. 1995; Patterson, K. 2003; Russell, R.F. & Stone, A.G. 2002).

**Sub-Question 6:** What is the impact of the empowerment leadership constructs on establishing a culture of high performance?

Q1: How do you perceive empowerment in your high school?

Q2: Empowerment often encourages risk taking and self-accountability, please describe the opportunities you see staff having within your high school to utilize empowerment?

**Probe:** Please tell me about a few specific ways you see empowerment impacting performance.
Service

Service is the moral equivalent of giving of oneself to serve others. It implies that leaders are focused on placing interest on others rather than on one’s own interest. It can be demonstrated through the gift of time, energy, compassion, care or belongings. Service places others first. (Patterson, K. 2003; Russell, R.G. & Stone, A.G.2002).

Sub-Question 7: What is the impact of the service leadership constructs on establishing a culture of high performance?

Q1: Please share some examples when you have witnessed service within your high school and how did that service impact the culture of high performance?

Q2: Describe a service that is provided in your high school and what do you believe is the impact of this service on the overall performance within the organization?

Probe: Why do you believe this service has that impact?

“Thank you very much for your time. If you like, when the results of our research are known, we will send you a copy of our findings.”

General Probes

Possible Probes for any of the items – For researcher’s eyes only

The general probes may be used during the interview when you want to get more information or expand the conversation with them. These are not questions you share with the interviewee. It is best to familiar with these probes and use them in a conversational way when appropriate to extend their responses.

1. “Would you expand upon that a bit?”
2. “Do you have more to add?”
3. “What did you mean by ………”
4. “Why do think that was the case?”
5. “Could you please tell me more about …… “
6. “Can you give me an example of ……”
7. “How did you feel about that?”