

A Qualitative Intrinsic Case Study to Explore Perception of Servant Leadership

Among Novice Assistant Principals

by

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Abstract

Assistant principalship is the first step in educational leadership. Much is required of the new assistant principal, which needs to be learned with little training. There is sufficient information describing the work environment of a novice assistant principal. There is a specific gap in the research to understand the knowledge novice assistant principals have regarding servant leadership theory, skills, and resources. The qualitative intrinsic case study will explore the familiarity novice assistant principals have with servant leadership and what servant leadership traits align as best practices in the leadership role. The purpose of the qualitative intrinsic case study is to explore the familiarity of servant leadership concepts among 15 novice assistant principals in the Northern Virginia region. The research is designed with open-ended questions to be given in an interview format. The 15 novice assistant principals will be selected from four school systems and have no more than three years of administrative experience. Collection of data is from three instruments: an interview to explore familiarity with servant leadership, completing a Word document detailing job responsibility, and a webinar designed for a focus group. Data will be analyzed by a triangulated method to include preset and emergent coding systems, which lead to categorical analysis. The study will benefit novice assistant principals in seeing servant leadership as a viable resource for the work environment. Additionally, the study will enhance foundational knowledge in educational leadership and educational professional development.

Dedication

I never imagined reaching this level of achievement, yet it is only a single part of my life journey. Those closest to me are the dearest measurement I have for being a good teacher and friend, and a loving husband and father. To my family and friends, I hope I have served you well. This paper is dedicated to those who fill my heart.

To Finnegan, Grady, and Lily Grace. From this, I hope you see lifelong learning is a great adventure. Thank you for seeing me through and I appreciate your kindness when you saw me in the corner chair, knowing I had work to do.

Most of all—to Mandy, I am nothing without you and I share this success with you in every way. Your help with computers, printing, copying, paper, semi-colons, and so much more has kept me from failing. Your support got me through many moments when I was ready to stop. My sincerest thanks and gratitude is immeasurable. I hope you feel my love and appreciation for having you by my side. This journey is done! Now, let's binge some Hallmark movies!

I did not reach p394, but, as our favorite professor would say, "Always."

Acknowledgements

It is amazing how a small, immeasurable act may have the power to change a life. I am blessed this has happened more than a few times in my life.

My brother Bob was the first to believe in me when I said I wanted to be a teacher, and the other O'Neill siblings, Dan, Den, Gary, Sally, and Nora made me feel what I was doing was important. It started with them and I have never forgotten.

The faculty and staff at American College of Education showed many times and in many ways how extraordinary this organization is. Thank you to Dr. Cooper, Dr. Curtis, Dr. DeMoulin, and Dr. Ausburn for serving on the dissertation committee. My sincerest thanks and gratitude is extended to Dr. Elizabeth Johnson. Your hours of support and patience propped up this learner on many occasion. Simply, this journey was not possible without your guidance. Alas, I owe you the largest cup of coffee imaginable.

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To all my colleagues and friends who have joined me on this journey, I say thanks!

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Becoming an assistant principal is the first step to a long-term, educational leadership position. Novice principals are administrators with less than three years of experience and are unfamiliar with leadership strategies promoting best practices for serving the school and community (National Association of Elementary School Principals [NAESP], 2016). Annually a large or small school system will promote employees to positions of specialist, supervisor, and administrator, which requires a continuous need for new assistant principals (Barnett, Shoho, & Oleszewski, 2012). The novice assistant principal can fulfill the basic functions of maintaining student behavior and monitoring academic achievement, but are unfamiliar with leadership theories (Putnam, 2016; Valdes, 2009). People promoted to serve in a leadership role benefit when identifying a suitable and relevant leadership philosophy (Goh & Zhen-Jie, 2014).

There is not a definitive standard for novice assistant principals to learn about leadership theories. The transition to assistant principal and the beginning work can be challenging. Often, assistant principals feel unprepared and without certain skills to work with the staff, students, and parents (Barnett et al., 2012). Research has been conducted to explore the work experiences of assistant principals, but there is a specific gap in the research to understand the level of knowledge novice assistant principals have regarding servant leadership theory, skills, and resources (Celik, 2013; Petrides, Jimes, & Karaglani, 2014; Putnam, 2016). Research needs to continue to add to the knowledge foundation for novice assistant principals. The potential benefits of exploring servant leadership in use by novice assistant principals can be viewed on an individual or systemic level.

The chapter will review the role of novice assistant principals and introduce the concept of servant leadership. The study will explore if novice assistant principals understand servant

leadership characteristics. Additionally, the study will explore how servant leadership traits can serve the new administrator. The problem and the purpose of the study provide significance and relevancy to the role of novice assistant principals. A summary of the scope, assumptions, delimitations, and limitations provide guidelines for participants. The outcome of the study will benefit administrators and add to the foundation of research for both servant leadership and novice assistant principals.

Background of the Problem

There are 928,000 administrators among public, charter, and private schools in the United States (Bureau of Labor and Statistics, 2016). Among the administrators, there are 231,500 assistant principals (Bureau of Labor and Statistics, 2016). In Washington, DC and Virginia, there is a short-term projected need of 140 new administrators (Torpey & Watson, 2014). Nationally, long-term projections indicate a need for 14,000 administrators through 2024 and an annual need for 8,380 through attrition or change (“Short Term Occupational Projections,” 2017). The work of an assistant principal will affect the entire student body, particularly with responsibilities for the welfare and safety of each individual and establish a respectful and professional rapport with all students and staff (The Room 241 Team, 2017). Without an awareness of servant leadership skills, the inexperienced leader lacks an understanding of best practices when communicating and collaborating with stakeholders (Russell, 2013). Literature regarding assistant principals comprehending the tenets of servant leadership theory is lacking, specifically active listening, empathy, foresight, persuasion, conceptualization, stewardship, commitment to growth, and building community (Spears, 2010). New school administrators lack experience and have minimal training when joining the leadership team (The Room 241 Team, 2017). A new assistant principal will have daily responsibilities such as hall duty, lunch duty,

and coverage for substitutes. Most of the time is spent on disciplinary matters with students (Militello, Fusarelli, Mattingly, & Warren, 2015). Assignments for new assistant principal are systemic responsibilities such as scheduling, testing, and monitoring academic achievement (The Room 241 Team, 2017). Additionally, new school leaders will be responsible for building positive relationships with students, parents, and teachers (Militello et al., 2015). Without a deliberate and purposeful approach to train the new school leader in servant leadership, the new assistant principal will lack decision-making skills (Searby, Browne-Ferrigno, & Wang, 2016). The qualitative intrinsic case study seeks to enhance the scholarly literature by exploring assistant principal's knowledge of servant leadership tenets.

Experiential learning is a theory in which one reflects on work experiences and determines how best to continue or revise best practices (Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2001). At the beginning, the novice assistant principal has limited experience in being a capable communicator and facilitator (McCannon, 2015). With minimal leadership knowledge, the novice assistant principal faces challenges to make decisions in the best interests of students and staff (Valdes, 2009). Servant leadership is a theory embracing holistic traits, which enhance the character and dignity of the individual (van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). An assistant principal can draw on the tenets of servant leadership to become an empathetic leader who serves the institution and supports individual growth (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

The problem is the level of knowledge novice assistant principals have of servant leadership theory is not known. The extent of the problem is evident when exploring if novice assistant principals are knowledgeable of leadership theories when starting the position (Craft, Malveaux, Lopez, & Combs, 2016; Putnam, 2016). Assistant principal's gain as much

experience and practical knowledge as possible, but not servant leadership experience (Mattocks, 2016). Additionally, assistant principals indicated university programs offered general information about school leadership, but little about the daily practices and strategies of being a new administrator (Putnam, 2016). Based on Putnam's (2016) findings, one can question whether servant leadership is within the skill set of novice assistant principals.

Servant leadership research indicates concept a worker-centric, flexible concept adaptable to varied organizations (Parris & Peachey, 2013; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Research about how servant leadership used among novice assistant principals is not known and little to no information exists concerning leadership practices among novice assistant principals. The research seeks to contribute to the current literature by providing information of how novice assistant principals complete daily responsibilities. The focus of the investigation is to explore if novice assistant principals are familiar with servant leadership tenets and how servant leadership traits serve as best practices for leadership. There is a need for more research on servant leadership and novice assistant principals.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the qualitative intrinsic case study is to explore the level of knowledge novice assistant principals have of servant leadership theory. Additionally, the research is necessary to understand what servant leadership traits are applicable as best practices for the work environment. The study is necessary since administrators are to be the stewards for a diverse leaning population. Fairfax and Prince William Counties of Northern Virginia have become a majority population of minority groups ("Virginia School District Demographic Profiles," 2018).

Servant leadership is an adaptable concept and is applicable to varied leadership environments (van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). The topic of the study is the concept of servant leadership's flexibility. The research on servant leadership needs to continue as the role of a novice assistant principal is open ended; both are subject to the parameters of the unique environment. The challenge is to identify the tenets and characteristics of both in action. The qualitative intrinsic case study will explore novice assistant principals and familiarity with servant leadership.

Prepared administrators are the caretaker for a positive learning environment including a multitude of cultures, languages, and learning styles. The study will contribute to servant leadership research by exploring the assistant principal experience, which will extend the knowledge base in educational leadership. Using the experiential learning theory as guidance, the study will explore novice assistant principals lived experiences and leadership skills (Kolb et al., 2001). The qualitative intrinsic case study will include an interview to discuss servant leadership, a survey to clarify servant leadership traits, and a group discussion to explore servant leader best practices. The study will be an original contribution to educational research by addressing necessary skills for a novice assistant principal to be an effective communicator and steward for students and staff. The outcome of the study is a resource for practice among school systems or among academic peers for further exploration.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study will provide valuable information concerning the level of knowledge assistant principals have of servant leadership theory, which can increase understanding in best practices implemented in school settings and professional development programs for new assistant principals. The entire community feels the impact when leadership is

unfamiliar with best practices of servant leadership (Spears, 2010). The people who benefit directly from novice assistant principals using servant leadership skills are students and staff. By using servant leadership traits of empathy, active listening, and supporting personal growth, the novice assistant principal is proactive in building a positive community (Spears, 2010). The novice assistant principal provides a positive and comfortable environment for students to learn and teachers to instruct thus the positive learning environment provides an opportunity for increased student achievement and decreased student disciplinary issues (Scott, 2011).

The study will explore servant leadership from the perspective of novice assistant principals in the suburban counties of Northern Virginia. The study will be a resource for aspiring educational leaders and school systems regarding best leadership practices for new assistant principals. The outcome of the study will benefit school systems, notably with assistant principal mentoring programs based on best practices for positive outcomes. The qualitative intrinsic case study is ideal because of exploring the perspective of the novice assistant principal. The study will investigate the lived experiences of the participants as novice assistant principals. The qualitative intrinsic case study is to interpret novice assistant principal's familiarity with servant leadership tenets.

Research Questions

The alignment of qualitative intrinsic case study is to the conceptual framework and research questions. The research questions explore the range of familiarity novice assistant principals have of servant leadership and servant leadership characteristics. The following research questions guide the qualitative intrinsic case study:

Research Question One: What is the level of knowledge novice assistant principals have of servant leadership theory?

Research Question Two: How familiar are novice assistant principals with servant leadership traits?

Research Question Three: What servant leadership traits are applicable as best practices for the work environment as identified by the sample of novice assistant principals?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the study is on servant leadership research. The research extends to the leadership role of novice assistant principals. Together, the two topics have not been discussed, yet can have a great impact on educational leadership. Leadership is an important factor in creating a positive work environment. Each person of a school administrative team, including the novice assistant principal, can have a direct impact on instruction and increased student achievement (Best, 2016). Additionally, servant leadership contains traits leading to effective communication, caring for the workforce, and supporting individual effort and growth (van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). Novice assistant principals and servant leadership can provide a caring and empathetic approach to support students and staff. Servant leadership traits discussed with novice assistant principals aligns with the research questions for the study.

Literature for servant leadership identifies a theory used among corporate leaders and businesses (Peterson, Galvin, & Lange, 2012), community service organizations (Rohm, 2013), and educational systems, notably among top superintendents and principals (Williams & Hatch, 2012). A synthesis of the literature for assistant principal positions depicts leaders who handle much of the operational duties of the school but lack the opportunity to participate in realms of leadership (Armstrong, 2015; Celik, 2013; Militello et al., 2015). Novice assistant principals express feelings of uncertainty, being overwhelmed and lacking skills to provide a comfortable

work environment (Barnett et al., 2012; Mattocks, 2016; McCannon, 2015). The literature review synthesized servant leadership characteristics in conjunction with the work experience of novice assistant principals.

Numerous servant leadership constructs are adaptable to school systems and administrators who wish to implement specific traits depict a caring and supportive assistant principal. The concept model in Figure 1 depicts the logic and rationale for exploring servant leadership among novice assistant principals. When viewing the diagram, one can observe the trend from a broad concept of servant leadership across organizations to a specific focus among educational groups. There is not a direct connection of servant leadership among novice assistant principals.

The conceptual framework is the guiding force in researching a broad topic and narrowing down to a specific focus (Creswell, 2014). The conceptual framework relates to the qualitative study due to a focus on a specific phenomenon, the familiarity novice assistant principals have with servant leadership.

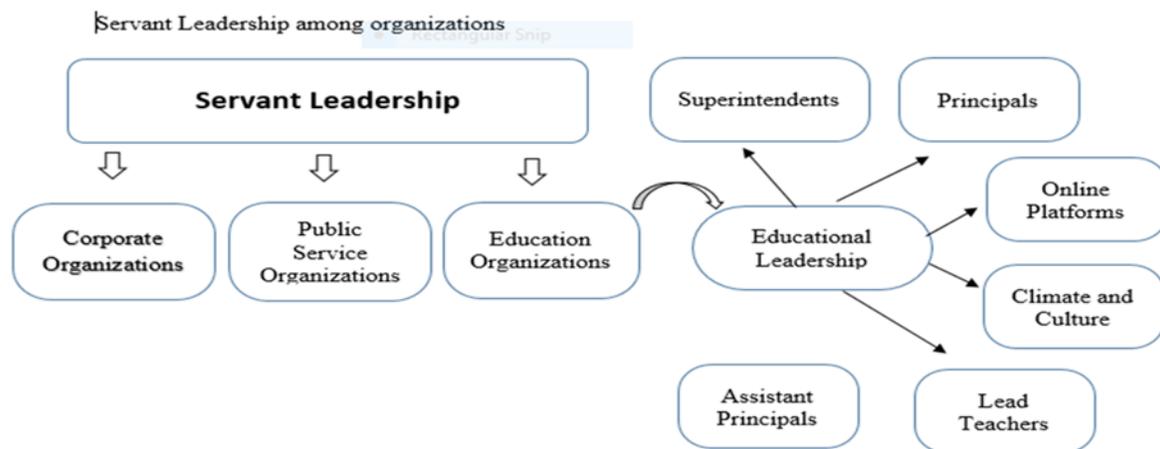


Figure 1: Servant leadership among organizations.

The research questions guide the exploration of the novice assistant principal's perspective regarding daily responsibilities and sustainable leadership. The research questions focus on the understanding or experience novice assistant principals have in conjunction with servant leadership tenets and how best to use them. The qualitative intrinsic case study will delve into the work experience of novice assistant principals. The perspective gained from being an assistant principal using servant leadership can be a resource for personal and professional growth (Spears, 2010). The coding system will categorize lived work experiences and synthesize servant leadership concepts such as empathy, stewardship, and building community.

Definitions of Terms

The key terms for the study are servant leadership, servant leader, novice assistant principal, and experiential learning. When doing content analysis, the terms commonly used when discussing servant leadership and novice assistant principals. The terms do not require a definition for measurement, are operational in nature, and are interpretive terms for the study.

Experiential learning: A learning theory in which knowledge is gained through application and reflection of work practices (Kolb et al., 2001).

Novice assistant principal: A new assistant principal with three or less years of continuing experience (NAESP, 2016).

Servant leader: A person who is purposeful in implementing servant leadership tenets and constructs in the work environment (Spears, 2010).

Servant leadership: A leadership theory with an emphasis on positive leadership through the concept of serving others as a priority (Greenleaf, 1977).

Limitations

Limitations to the study can influence the findings for the case study, notably by the sample population and the interpretation of data. One limitation is the sample population will not be filled as anticipated. The sample population is to be diverse and representative of the three levels of primary and secondary education. Filling the sample can be impacted by the response from the school systems and the assistant principals who wish to participate. In turn, the credibility of the study will be impacted and lack comprehensive integrity. A second limitation is possible with interpretation of answers from the participants. Interpretation of the study will be twofold; the assistant principal will interpret work experiences in conjunction with interpreting servant leadership traits. Novice assistant principals are inexperienced and one must consider possible responses do not reflect the essence of the work experience. Confirmability is influenced if the answers are not interpreted correctly. If the data is neither credible nor confirmable, transferability is limited.

Delimitations

The study is to explore if novice assistant principals are aware of how to use servant leadership. The study will be implemented among novice assistant principals working in the Washington, DC metropolitan and Northern Virginia area. Each jurisdiction is a county school system, working within the policies and laws established for each county. The objective is to have a well-rounded sample to include novice assistant principals from varied environments, notably different socioeconomic groups and multiple levels of school administrators. The school systems included within the study have a varied socioeconomic and diverse population and the potential to provide diverse participants. The qualitative intrinsic case study is designed within the concept of experiential learning (Kolb et al., 2001). The outcome of the study will provide a

foundation of knowledge in a direct environment and transferable to the larger community of new school administrators.

Assumptions

An assumption is understood to be a statement believed to be true within the context of the topic or subject (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017). Assumptions for the qualitative intrinsic case study are a guiding force when interpreting the outcomes of the participants. The participants will be providing information in a threefold fashion: (a) to complete a survey to determine familiarity with servant leadership, (b) a questionnaire to clarify servant leadership tenets within the work experience, and (c) a webinar for a group study activity. The significance of the study is dependent on assumptions connected to the participant's behavior in the activities. Assumptions influencing the outcome of the study are varied and dependent on frank responses from the participants. The coding criteria for measurement and interpretation in a qualitative case study are to be appropriate and relevant to the study, which is authentic in meaning to the participants (Creswell, 2014). The participants will have a legitimate and sincere interest to participate considering the outcomes will have a direct and relevant impact towards leadership among novice assistant principals. The participants will take part in each activity and answer all questions honestly and with frankness according to work experiences. Consideration is given to assumptions, as participants will respond according to work experience and individual perspective.

Chapter Summary

Assistant principals step into a new role with little experience or training (Armstrong, 2015). Having a strong foundation as a new administrator, specifically with leadership theory, will be beneficial as one builds communication and relationship skills. Servant leadership tenets

such as being empathetic, responsive, and supportive are basic tenets of good leadership, yet minimally understood among novice assistant principals. Greenleaf (1977) believed one “must serve to lead” (p. 6). There is an abundance of research indicating servant leadership is a viable resource for leaders in both personal and professional settings and in singular or large environments (Parris & Peachey, 2013).

The problem of the study is, it is not known the level of knowledge novice assistant principals have of leadership theories. Servant leadership is a descriptive concept, which can be applied in varied settings and environments. The study will specifically explore if novice assistant principals understand how to use servant leadership. The significance of the study will be reflected in best practices implemented in school settings and professional development programs for new assistant principals.

In the next chapters, the literature review will synthesize an understanding of servant leadership theory and the work experiences of assistant principals. The methodology will detail the protocols and procedures for research. Servant leadership has evolved from an abstract concept (Greenleaf, 1977), to identifiable constructs (Page & Wong, 2000; Patterson, 2003), to measurable instruments (Green, Rodriguez, Wheeler, & Baggerly-Hinojosa, 2015). Research, which focused on novice assistant principals, depicted new leaders whom were unsure and lacked training for leadership (Barnett et al., 2012; Celik, 2013; Santacrose, 2016). The servant leadership research, done in conjunction with research about novice assistant principals, indicates a disconnection between the two topics. The findings from the study will indicate if servant leadership is a valuable skill for novice assistant principals.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of the qualitative intrinsic case study is to explore the familiarity of servant leadership concepts among 15 novice assistant principals in the Northern Virginia region. It is essential for leadership teams to have a basic understanding of leadership theories. Additionally, leadership teams know how to apply relevant leadership skills. Servant leadership is a philosophy which encompasses the ideals of a leader being the steward for the workforce and supportive of individual growth (Parris & Peachey, 2013). The problem is servant leadership is an unfamiliar concept among new administrators and how to be used in leadership roles, specifically for novice assistant principals. The literature review will explore if there is sufficient research regarding servant leadership and novice assistant principals.

Current literature indicates novice assistant principals are given a multitude of responsibilities, including being the caretaker of the staff and students (NAESP, 2016; Petrides et al., 2014). Research suggests novice assistant principals are assigned daily tasks to secure a safe school environment, be supportive of the staff, and to build positive relationships with the community (The Room 241 Team, 2017). There is a gap in the literature regarding training about leadership concepts (Putnam, 2016). Exploring the work experience of novice assistant principals is necessary. By exploring the experience of novice assistant principals, one can understand a foundation of knowledge should be established to understand if servant leadership is a viable resource for novice assistant principals.

The literature review will discuss specific trends regarding the implementation of servant leadership. Topics include initial development of servant leadership, instruments to measure servant leadership, servant leadership among leaders, and servant leadership among educators and education systems. The literature review uncovered much information for an assistant

principal's role and responsibilities. As part of the literature review, a void is observed in servant leadership research relating to novice assistant principals. The literature review will synthesize assistant principal's knowledge and conceptualization of best practices for leadership (Manolis, Burns, Assudani, & Chinta, 2013).

Literature Search Strategy

The servant leadership literature review was guided by theoretical and empirical topics. A theoretical review started with Greenleaf's (1970, 1977) original and seminal work about servant leadership. Servant leadership theories continued to be developed by later practitioners and leaders (Laub, 1999; Spears, 1996, 2010). An extended review of servant leadership literature led to the observation servant leadership is commonly used in corporate businesses and public service organizations (Parris & Peachey, 2013). A specific focus involved researching servant leadership theory in education and among educators. Servant leadership has been explored through teachers, principals, and superintendents (Masewicz & Vogel, 2014; Noland & Richards, 2015; Williams & Hatch, 2012). There is a gap in the literature regarding how assistant principals use servant leadership.

To align servant leadership with the purpose of the study, a diligent search was completed regarding aspects for an assistant principal such as role, identity, and preparation (Petrides et al., 2014). The concept of novice assistant principals not being familiar with servant leadership led to researching daily responsibilities and lived experiences of school administrators. Research indicated a strong need for assistant principals to fill empty positions due to attrition and promotion ("Short Term Occupational Projections," 2017). The literature indicated assistant principals are often seen as the administrator completing the daily responsibilities to maintain a safe and orderly learning environment (The Room 241 Team,

2017). The novice assistant principal has the self-perspective of doing whatever tasks were assigned and lack theoretical training and preparation (Craft et al., 2016; Putnam, 2016).

Empirical research involved combing through databases and search engines, which often returned the same results from a query. Databases are organized, digitized sources of information usually provided to libraries through a secondary source. Databases with education as the subject were useful in identifying leadership concepts. Contrary, search engines are not organized in the same manner and will provide results based on a specific search by key terms. Table 1 categorizes the common search engines, databases, and search terms for the literature review.

Table 1

Search Engines, Databases, and Search Terms for Servant Leadership

Search engines	Databases	Key terms
Google	ProQuest	<i>Servant leadership</i>
Google Scholar	EBSCO	<i>Organizational leadership</i>
Ask.com	ERIC	<i>Educational leadership</i>
OpenAthens	American Doctoral Dissertations	<i>Assistant principal</i>
	Sage Knowledge and Research Methods	<i>Novice assistant principal</i>

Google Scholar was a viable search engine for servant leadership topics, specifically when filtering for servant leadership literature reviews (Kim, Kim, & Choi, 2014; Parris & Peachey, 2013), and servant leadership instruments (Rachmawati & Lantu, 2014; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Articles for qualitative studies, specifically, case studies relevant to the format for the study were reviewed for methodology, coding, and interpretation (Creswell, 2014). Databases posited in the American College of Education library were comprehensive in providing peer reviewed articles with an emphasis on servant leadership, organizational leadership, and educational leadership. Databases provided sufficient resources to understand

the complexity of the role for a novice assistant principal. Among the databases, ProQuest was a vital resource when researching assistant principals in relation to servant leadership. Numerous doctoral dissertations provided a greater focus in comparison to peer reviewed articles, specifically when researching the perceived identity and role of the novice assistant principal.

Conceptual Framework

One can consider the framework being the map to understanding the problem, the purpose for the study, and the process for researching the topic. Theoretical and conceptual frameworks can be complementary in nature and still differ in scope; a theoretical framework will have a broad scope and a conceptual framework will be narrow in focus (Creswell, 2014). Servant leadership is applicable in broad and narrow realms. The literature review will explore a narrow focus towards novice assistant principals being familiar with servant leadership. A conceptual framework will be designed by following related contexts of servant leadership and an assumption of how servant leadership may work in a specific environment.

Notable leadership theorists and practitioners have provided a conceptual framework for understanding servant leadership. Greenleaf (1977) was the first to speak of servant leadership, emphasizing the leader is to act as servant, or caretaker, for the workforce. A paradigm shift occurred in leadership theory, but Greenleaf did not provide constructs of how servant leadership looks or works. As servant leadership evolved into theory, practitioners better outlined specific models (Laub, 1999; Page & Wong, 2000; Patterson, 2003; Spears, 1996). Additionally, researchers observed how servant leadership was used in corporate business, public service organizations, and education institutions (Parris & Peachey, 2013). The review will synthesize ideals and practices for servant leadership, especially when used in an educational setting.

The purpose of the qualitative intrinsic case study is to explore the level of knowledge novice assistant principals have of servant leadership theory. Understanding the perspectives and lived experiences of assistant principals can best be explored from the experiential theory of learning, in which knowledge and understanding is gained due to work experience (Kolb et al., 2001). The concept aligns with the essential questions of the study in exploring servant leadership among novice assistant principals in the work environment. If servant leadership is observed within the specific environment of education, one can question if novice assistant principals will make good use of servant leadership when able to conceptualize work responsibilities and reflect on best practices.

Research Literature Review

The concept of servant leadership is not as concrete as is perceived. Servant leadership evolved from Greenleaf's (1977) ideals, which defined servant leadership "as serving others first" (p. 9). To define servant leadership according to a specific environment is the challenge theorists and researchers have addressed since its inception. Practitioners expanded the servant leadership concept when it was conducive to the organization or work environment. The problem within the educational organization or work environment is servant leadership is an unfamiliar concept among novice assistant principals in school leadership roles.

Development of Servant Leadership

Servant leadership is a paradigm shift in leadership style, focusing on the growth of the individual and acting as the steward for the institution. The basic tenets of servant leadership include focusing on the institution and supporting individual growth (Greenleaf, 1977, 1998). In traditional leadership, one accumulated and exercised power from the top of the pyramid. Servant leadership is different and is transformative in nature for both the leader and the

workforce. A servant leader shares power, prioritizes the needs of others, and builds a positive and collaborative work environment (Spears, 2010).

Origin of Servant Leadership

As a former chief executive officer for AT&T, Greenleaf (1977) spoke about the role of leadership evolving from an authoritarian position to one of being the caretaker for the work force. His seminal work about servant leadership was the foundation for the theory and the basis for continued studies (Greenleaf, 1970, 1977). Greenleaf expounded on the idea moral authority is the ultimate source of power and is the essence in developing a trusting and caring work environment. Greenleaf was influenced by Herman Hesse's classic novella *Journey to the East* in which the benevolent and entertaining servant of a traveling group turns out to be the true leader of the expedition. Greenleaf strongly identified with Hesse's story and embraced the concept of the leader who serves first and establishes trust and caring among the group.

The essential components to Greenleaf's servant leadership theory is twofold; the leader can be the caretaker for the individual and the institution is the steward for the work culture and environment. The ideal is best expressed from Greenleaf:

Do those served grow as a person? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived? (p. 6)

The concept of servant leadership is a commitment to serve others and has been practiced throughout time and among many leaders. Greenleaf addressed servant leadership in a contemporary context, yet there are examples of the leadership style among historical and philosophical leaders (Parris & Peachey, 2013). The servant leadership concept is evident in the

words and teachings of contemporary leaders seeking peaceful outcomes such as Martin Luther King, Mohandas Gandhi, and Mother Theresa (Grisaffe, VanMeter, & Chonko, 2016).

Additionally, the concept of servant leadership is evident in the philosophies of Confucius, Lao-Tzu, and Jesus; all who emphasized putting one's self interest secondary to helping others (Jit & Sharma, 2017). While servant leadership is evident among historical and philosophical leaders, identifying servant leadership as a consistent model with constructs has been challenging.

Greenleaf assumed as much when he iterated his servant leadership concept lacks definitive steps for implementation (Greenleaf, 1977). Researchers called for empirical studies in which servant leadership is conceptualized and modeled (Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005; Rachmawati & Lantu, 2014; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).

In the initial concept, servant leadership was an abstract theory and without example of how to implement, but the concept was one which others adapted to constructs and models and refined to the appropriate environment. Servant leadership became a tangible concept by identifying the characteristics by which servant leaders worked. Laub (1999) was one of the first practitioners to define servant leadership and identify organizational traits. Laub completed a Delphi study to explore the characteristics and align to an organizational construct. Additionally, Spears (1996, 2010) identified 10 servant leadership traits he believed were applicable to any organization. Listening, empathy, awareness, healing, foresight, persuasion, conceptualization, stewardship, commitment to growth, and building community are universal traits for the servant leadership concept. Essentially, Greenleaf (1977) envisioned the possibilities of servant leadership and Laub and Spears provided an initial, tangible model and definitive characteristics for servant leadership.

Servant Leadership Philosophy

Servant leadership is a flexible concept, primarily used by individuals for professional and personal guidance. Whether embraced by an individual or an organization, servant leadership holds to some basic tenets, which guide servant leader actions. Servant leadership can be understood both in broad and specific realms. Greenleaf's (1977) generalizations of being an empathetic leader willing to support personal growth and build a positive work environment are the foundation for servant leadership. While a universal definition for servant leadership is elusive, the tenets used to outline servant leadership enhances the varied characteristics and constructs. Models and instruments have further clarified specific characteristics, which complement the servant leadership principles.

Listening as a servant leader brings a different perspective to communication in the work environment. To be an active listener, one is willing to hear for understanding and not to immediately respond. An active listener is committed to being respectful during the conversation and acknowledging what was said. The servant leader who listens actively will find the opportunity to ask questions for clarity and extend the conversation (Spears, 2010). Servant leaders have been consistently valued for active listening and being vested in the discussion. The growth of the servant leader and follower can happen simultaneously when both are listening and reflecting (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).

Empathy, or compassion, is a vital component to servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977). The need for compassion in the workforce is almost universal and the servant leader will show empathy and put others first. Empathy in servant leadership includes individual and collective caring. Empathy can be seen as caring, forgiving, being kind, accepting, and showing appreciation for the person and effort (Grisaffe et al., 2016). Patterson (2003) included love as a

vital component for empathy. Empathy can be exhibited collectively by putting the workforce first, serving others, and being deliberate in valuing others. Emotional healing is an outcome of empathy and vital when the servant leader is cognizant of healing relationships (Winston & Fields, 2015).

Stewardship is when a person is purposeful in maintaining the well-being of the community. A leader acting as the steward for the work environment is the essence of servant leadership (Brown & Bryant, 2015). Being the steward for the institution is to act as the trustee for the good of the workforce and community (Winston & Fields, 2015). A servant leader acting as steward has made a personal commitment to serving others first. A person who embraces servant leadership sees being a steward as the caretaker of the community, not being the leader. The servant leader acting as steward will take full responsibility for the well-being of the workforce and ensure the common good of the work environment is secured (Parris & Peachey, 2013).

Servant leaders believe people have a contributory value to the workplace and will experience personal growth. Servant leadership embraces the personal growth of the individual as a vital component to the health of the organization (Laub, 1999). The servant leader is committed to the growth of the individual in the workplace (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). The servant leader recognizes the tremendous responsibility to nurture the growth of employees (Spears, 2010). An important component leading to personal growth is the sincerity and integrity conveyed by the servant leader to support the individual with personal growth (van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015).

The servant leader who is empowering will give autonomy for decisions and actions in the workplace. In servant leadership, the leader recognizes, acknowledges, and supports the skill

and talent of individuals in the workforce (Coetzer, Bussin, & Geldenhuys, 2017; Parris & Peachey, 2013; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). In addition, the servant leader encourages employees in personal growth (Page & Wong, 2000). If a servant leader is empowering, the employee has the self-perception of being more than a subordinate and adding value and strength to the work community (Parris & Peachey, 2013). By empowering employees to be people of original thought and action, the servant leader is developing future leaders, possibly in the realm of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977, 1998).

Servant Leadership Models and Constructs

Initial theorists and practitioners who designed servant leadership models did so without measurement for validation and reliability. Spears (2010), Patterson (2003), and Page and Wong (2000) made influential contributions to servant leadership based on identifying characteristics which best represent servant leaders within a conceptual framework. Each model, with constructs, was based on Greenleaf's (1977) servant leadership concept. Table 2 notes the characteristics of Spears's 10 servant leadership traits; Patterson's seven servant leadership traits; and Page and Wong's four servant leadership orientations. Each of the theorists provided a consistent model from which researchers built instruments to measure servant leadership.

Constructs, or conceptual elements, can vary greatly within servant leadership theory (van Dierendonck, 2011). The flexibility in defining and modeling servant leadership makes possible having differing, yet valid constructs due to the specifics of the organization or individual. Constructs are unique to each environment, but it is evident there are commonalities, notably the concept of empathy, empowerment towards subordinates, levels of leadership, supporting individual growth, and building community.

Table 2

Initial Servant Leadership Models

Spears's (2010) servant leadership traits	Patterson's (2003) servant leadership traits	Page & Wong's (2000) servant leadership orientations
Listening	Agape love	Character
Empathy	Humility	People
Healing	Altruism	Task
Awareness	Vision	Process
Conceptualization	Trust	
Foresight	Empowerment	
Stewardship	Service	
Commitment to grow		
Building community		

Table 3 summarizes the servant leadership instruments and constructs for servant leadership.

Table 3

Constructs Among Servant Leadership Instruments

Instrument	Constructs
Organizational Leadership Assessment (Laub, 1999)	Valuing people, developing people, building community, displaying authenticity, providing leadership, sharing leadership
Servant Leadership Scale (Ehrhart, 2004)	Building relationships with subordinates, empowering subordinates, helping subordinates grow and succeed, behaving ethically
Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument (Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005)	Agape love, humility, vision, trust, empowerment, calling
Servant Leadership Scale (Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008)	Emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skills, empowering, helping subordinates grow and succeed, putting subordinates first, behaving ethically
Servant Leadership Scale (Sendjaya, Sarros, & Santora, 2008)	Voluntary subordination, authentic self, covenantal relationship, responsible morality, transcendental spirituality, transforming influence
Servant Leadership Survey (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011)	Empowerment, accountability, standing back, humility, authenticity, courage, interpersonal acceptance, stewardship

Measuring Servant Leadership

Since Greenleaf, considerable research has been conducted in varied methodologies to better understand servant leadership. Servant leadership is a broad concept and has been extensively researched. Since 2000, there have been publications of 190 dissertations, 136 peer reviewed articles, and 265 books (Green et al., 2015). Parris and Peachey (2013) discovered a large portion of the servant leadership research is focused on business, education, and psychology. Servant leadership has been studied in sales, sports and health management, religious institutions, and public service fields such as restaurants and hotels (Savage-Austin & Honeycutt, 2011). A common thread through the studies is the lack of a universal and tangible definition and model for servant leadership. There are models and instruments, which qualify and quantify servant leadership.

Greenleaf (1998), Spears (2010), Patterson (2003), and Page and Wong (2000) provided definitive models which initially characterized servant leadership. Since then, servant leadership instruments have been developed in measurable, empirical studies. There has been notable research to measure servant leadership in the form of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodology instruments. To date, there are seven instruments to measure servant leadership. Table 4 identifies the servant leadership instruments in chronological order.

Servant leadership instruments have been designed for different purposes. Some of the instruments were developed to measure organizational effectiveness (Ehrhart, 2004; Laub, 1999). Additional servant leadership instruments were designed to check construct clarity or determine the most common servant leadership characteristics (Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008; Sendjaya, Sarros, & Santora, 2008).

Table 4

Servant Leadership Instruments

Servant leadership instrument	Year	Researcher
Organizational Leadership Assessment	1999	Laub
Servant Leadership Scale	2004	Ehrhart
Servant Leadership Questionnaire	2006	Barbuto & Wheeler
Servant Leadership Scale	2008	Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson
Servant Leadership Behavior Scale	2008	Sendjaya, Sarros, & Santora
Servant Leadership Survey	2011	van Dierendonck & Nuijten
School Principal's Servant Leadership Behavior Scale	2015	Ekinci

Instruments were developed to validate the models presented by servant leadership practitioners (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Of note, one instrument was designed for educational leaders, specifically principals (Ekinci, 2015). Each servant leadership instrument had the general focus of exploring what constructs best define servant leadership.

Two servant leadership instruments were designed to specifically to measure organizational effectiveness, climate, and culture. Laub (1999), as part of his dissertation, developed the Servant Organizational Leadership Assessment Instrument. The qualitative instrument was designed as a Delphi study, which assessed organizational and leadership concepts. The data confirmed Laub's three questions as to whether servant leadership can be defined, characteristics be identified, and an instrument be developed. A similar instrument explored servant leadership dimensions for a specific, organizational environment, which were relevant to positive leadership behaviors (Ehrhart, 2004). The *Servant Leadership Scale* questionnaire was given to supermarket management and workforce alike to determine if preconceived notions were evident regarding expectations, climate, and culture in the work

environment. Ehrhart (2004) determined servant leadership traits were conducive to behaviors held in high regard for organizational leadership.

Two servant leadership instruments explored servant leadership constructs and confirmed the most common servant leadership characteristics. The *Servant Leadership Scale* is a conceptual model for servant leadership based on self-developed characteristics (Liden et al., 2008). The *Servant Leadership Scale* included seven servant leadership dimensions and 85 items, which explored the possibility for multiple dimensions and levels when observing servant leadership characteristics. Separately, the *Servant Leadership Behavior Scale* was developed by Sendjaya et al. (2008). The Delphi study confirmed servant leadership was a multidimensional theory with constructs being applicable in diverse environments. The Delphi participants confirmed six dimensions and 73 items to measure servant leadership traits in a hierarchical manner.

Three instruments were specifically designed to validate servant leadership models. The *Servant Leadership Assessment Instrument* was developed by Dennis and Bocarnea (2005). The unique parameters for the instrument was the direct use of Patterson's (2003) construct for servant leadership. Dennis and Bocarnea reviewed the seven constructs from Patterson, and determined five constructs of love, humility, empowerment, vision, and trust were acceptable while service and altruism were not viable. Ultimately, five dimensions and 42 items were accepted for the servant leadership assessment. Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) developed the *Servant Leadership Questionnaire*, which is based on Spears's (1996) 10 characteristics. Barbuto and Wheeler added an 11th trait: calling. The instrument was organized into five dimensions with 23 items. The instrument clarified Spears's servant leadership characteristics as measurements closely identified with transformational leadership, leader-member exchange, and

organizational effectiveness. Lastly, the *Servant Leadership Survey* was developed by van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011). The survey was developed based on an extensive literature review of previous servant leadership instruments. van Dierendonck and Nuijten included all constructs developed by Spears, Patterson, and Page and Wong; ultimately developing an instrument with eight dimensions and 30 items.

A specific instrument was developed for school principals in relation to servant leadership characteristics. The *School Principals' Servant Leadership Behaviors Scale* explored servant leadership traits based on teacher perception (Ekinci, 2015). The study confirmed five dimensions of servant leadership and was supported by 39 items for scale. The findings indicated the teacher's wish to see principals being altruistic, empathetic, and to work with justice, integrity, and humility (Ekinci, 2015). It is noted the servant leadership constructs accepted for the instrument were submitted to an expert panel and confirmed through a survey to teachers.

Common in servant leadership research is working with constructs spanning multiple dimensions and levels. To make sense of the constructs and organize to scale, exploratory factor and confirmatory factor analyses were completed for each instrument. Exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis are sequential practices to determine the relationship among many variables and allow for categorization (Creswell, 2014). Each of the servant leadership instruments implements exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis to identify relationships among servant leadership traits and were to create or verify dimensions.

Servant Leadership Among Educational Leaders

Servant leadership can be seen in education organizations and leaders. The servant leadership traits contribute to a positive and encouraging learning environment (Panaccio,

Henderson, Liden, Wayne, & Cao, 2015). Servant leadership is used in leadership positions in education such as superintendents and principals (Pollock, 2013; Williams & Hatch, 2012).

There is a noticeable void regarding servant leadership and new assistant principals.

Superintendents as servant leaders. School system superintendents are responsible for organizing and managing a school system and developing a positive learning and working environment (Williams & Hatch, 2012). The depth and breadth of the superintendent position encompasses school safety, community concerns, fiscal solvency, and employee satisfaction (Weiss, Templeton, & Thompson, 2014). Servant leadership is often embraced among school superintendents and can be viewed in generalized or specific contexts for a school leader. The perspective of the workforce and the perception about the organizational culture, for which the superintendent is responsible, can be measured or interpreted via servant leadership concepts (Williams & Hatch, 2012). Superintendents who use foresight and compassion can influence increased student achievement (Pearson, 2015).

Servant leadership traits may characterize a superintendent's work ethic (Parris & Peachey, 2013). Servant leadership traits such as trust and integrity on the part of the superintendent promotes and supports a positive culture for the organization (Williams & Hatch, 2012). Additionally, servant leadership practices are vital factors for student achievement (Pearson, 2015). The servant leadership characteristics identified by Spears; listening, empathy, healing, persuasion, awareness, foresight, conceptualization, commitment to the growth of people, stewardship, and building community were used by superintendents to create a culture which promoted academic success (Spears, 1996). A superintendent who acts as steward for the workforce develops a positive and collaborative environment (Williams & Hatch, 2012).

Servant leadership is a flexible model and used in varied educational settings. A phenomenological study explored the strategies of eight superintendents in rural school districts who self-claimed to be servant leaders (Overbo, 2016). The findings determined rural superintendents implemented many servant leadership strategies, notably when emphasizing positive connections with people (Overbo, 2016). By using the servant leadership traits, the superintendents built trusting relationships. At the other end of the spectrum, servant leadership can influence superintendents working in urban settings (Carpenter, Bukoski, Berry, & Mitchell, 2015). Eight superintendents were interviewed and the servant leadership traits emphasized most often were humility, service, and commitment to others (Carpenter et al., 2015).

The literature regarding servant leadership and its use among educational leaders depicts a philosophy, which is used in numerous settings and for varied reasons. Servant leadership is not relegated to a specific school environment, nor is it limited in its systemic scope. Like superintendents, school principals made use of servant leadership as a viable resource in a leadership role. Ideally, principals have implemented servant leadership as a way of promoting a safe and positive environment for both students and faculty.

Principals as servant leaders. The principal is the administrative, instructional, and professional leader of the school. The principal oversees the operation of the school and ensures the daily routines to provide a safe and productive environment for students and staff (Feng, 2016). Completing all facets of daily responsibilities is necessary for the principal to exhibit leadership practices, which support the vision and mission for the school (Bell & Taylor, 2015). Early on, principals come to understand the ultimate responsibility for the well-being of the school community and how unprepared one is for the role (Bell & Taylor, 2015; Spillane & Lee, 2014). Servant leadership theory is a viable resource for school organization and management.

A novice assistant principal can gain credibility in a school setting in numerous ways. Moral authority can have a strong impact on transformational and servant leadership (Tomlinson, 2017). Just as teachers show genuine care for students, principals establish a collaborative environment, establish shared values, and are the steward for the workforce. A principal establishing a culture of service, specifically to be cognizant of employees and provide opportunities for growth and empowerment will create a trusting environment, which includes the leader (Pouramiri & Mehdinezhad, 2017). In doing so, the school culture is reinforcing a stewardship for the workers in which service is foremost.

A positive relationship between school administrators and the workforce is the satisfaction, which evolves from the practices of a servant leader (Shaw & Newton, 2014). If the goal in education is high student achievement, then one can consider supporting the workforce (Terosky & Reitano, 2016). In the contexts of foresight, awareness, active listening, and conceptualization are servant leadership traits, which support teacher instruction and planning (Terosky & Reitano, 2016). In fact, teachers desired a principal who displayed servant leadership behaviors such as community building, empathy, active listening, humility, and altruism (Insley, Jaeger, Ekinci, & Sakiz, 2016). Teachers wish to have principals who exhibit servant leadership traits (Ekinci, 2015).

Servant leadership among teacher leaders and online platforms. Servant leadership has been explored in a hierarchical fashion, downward in levels of authority. Servant leadership is present at the instructional level, especially among teacher leaders and with online learning platforms. Research indicated teachers respond favorably to servant leadership, which emphasizes the nature of serving, is based on moral authority (Wahyuni, Christiananta, & Eliyana, 2014). Additionally, teaching is altruistic in nature and a natural setting to see servant

leadership traits implemented daily (Noland & Richards, 2015). Servant leadership can be transcendental in nature with teacher leaders forsaking the perspective of the individual employer and be the servant for society and stakeholders (Wood, 2017). As leaders incorporate servant leadership ideals for the workforce, the workers in turn use servant leadership principles in daily responsibilities and relationships.

An important component for online learning is to establish a platform, which is collegial and collaborative. Research has explored how servant leadership ideals were evident in online learning platforms (van de Bunt-Kokhuis & Sultan, 2012). A new teacher leader is needed to assist students in technology and to provide varied learning opportunities. Even though students do not see each other, the teacher as servant leader serves as an empathetic steward for the learner and the facilitator for the online community (van de Bunt-Kokhuis & Sultan, 2012). Additionally, research identified five antecedents, which characterize an online servant leader: having a vision, active listening, committed to staff, empowerment, and building community (Boone & Makhani, 2013).

Role of Assistant Principals

An assistant principal position is an entry-level position in educational leadership and assists the principal in the overall management of the school. The job of an assistant principal is multifaceted; fast paced, and requires daily multitasking. The assistant principal is responsible for the safety of the students and ensures the school is compliant with federal and state guidelines. To be a proactive and strong leader, the assistant principal is to be effective communicator, problem solver, and organizational manager. While facing the rigor of being a new school leader, novice assistant principal need to establish positive relationships. Research

indicates there is much about the transition to leadership and the development of the identity and role of the assistant principal.

Novice assistant principals. Initially, assistant principals face a reality check once assuming the role of assistant principal. Work habits of novice and experienced assistant principals were researched and numerous factors affect the work, notably: task management and organization, dealing with adults and students, and being a curriculum and instructional leader (Barnett et al., 2012; Valdes, 2009). Additionally, assistant principals can struggle if the leadership role is not clearly defined (Celik, 2013). Novice assistant principals can feel unprepared for the rigor of the position and believe the position is inadequate as a training ground (Craft et al., 2016). New assistant principals noted a lack of confidence in making decisions but recognized the importance of building positive and trusting relationships with students and staff (Petrides et al., 2014).

Novice assistant principals experienced frustration and anxiety as new leaders, especially in transition (Armstrong, 2015; Santacrose, 2016). Assistant principals experience the full spectrum of confidence and doubt; from feeling accomplishment and competence to frustration and isolation (Santacrose, 2016). Assistant principals wished to make a significant contribution to making the school better, yet faced unexpected challenges such as lack of training, lack of understanding roles, and lack of time to learn responsibilities (Armstrong, 2015). In transition, educators who were good communicators as teachers convert well to administrative roles (Lampton-Holmes, 2014; Landry, 2012). The transition to assistant principal is challenging when communicating and conveying information and expectations. Training and mentoring prior to and including the transition for novice assistant principals would be beneficial (Hoffert, 2015).

As novice assistant principals become familiar with the job, both in duties and expectations, there is the struggle to understand one's professional identity. A study of assistant principals emphasized the difference between what assistant principals want to do and what is done (Militello et al., 2015). The assistant principal is assigned operational duties such as discipline, facilities management, and observations, but little time in a leadership capacity for climate and culture (Beam, Claxton, & Smith, 2016; Militello et al., 2015). An assistant principal may form identity due to demographic settings and ethnicity (Salazar, 2015). The ethnicity of the administrator was helpful when aligned with the demographics of the community (Salazar, 2015). Additionally, high school assistant principals in an urban setting reported high levels of self-efficacy when working in a learning environment constituting empathy, foresight, and building community (Finley, 2013).

Professional development does assist the novice assistant principal with adapting to the rigors of daily responsibilities. Assistant principals desired to have professional development during formative years emphasizing special education, school culture, work/life balance, and school budgeting (Marshall & Davidson, 2016). A deliberate and purposeful approach to train the new school leader in servant leadership is necessary to minimize the lack of foundation for decision-making (Searby et al., 2016). Novice assistant principals found valuable support in informal settings within the work environment (Beam et al., 2016). Assistant principals wish to have more of an impact on student achievement and better preparation for leadership roles (Best, 2016).

Novice assistant principals who are unprepared for the leadership role will influence handling student discipline. Student misbehaviors were the top concern for the school environment (Sapienza, 2013). Better preparation in building relationships was beneficial to the

novice assistant principal. In addition to the skills needed to deal with student behavior (Scott, 2011), administrators expressed frustration dealing with disciplinary matters for students with special needs and the lack of social understanding towards Black males (Ragsdale, 2013). Each study determined assistant principals were reactive in nature and needed to have a better understanding of building positive relationships and an empathetic environment (Ragsdale, 2013; Sapienza, 2013; Williams & Hatch, 2012).

Perhaps the greatest challenge for the novice assistant principal is to learn quickly how to make decisions and respond in an ethical manner. The actions and decisions of an administrator are to be in accordance with school policies and procedures. Novice assistant principals regularly face dilemmas, which may include moral and ethical decisions (Minami, 2013). Actions are guided by the values of the assistant principal, which will have an impact among varied stakeholders. Assistant principals have a moral purpose, respect and care for people, support all learning, maximize opportunities for staff, and build collective responsibility and collaboration (Minami, 2013). Emotional intelligence has a great impact on leadership and align to the servant leadership traits of personal growth and building community (McCannon, 2015).

The identity and role of the assistant principal is a fine balance between the operational responsibilities and the idealized leadership one wishes to practice. The daily responsibilities of the assistant principal predominately remain managerial duties such as attendance, discipline, and routine duties (Mattocks, 2016). Assistant principal's work has expanded to include curriculum and professional development, staff management, and instructional leadership (Armstrong, 2015). Mattocks (2016) concluded assistant principals see the principal as a positive influence but wish to have leadership opportunities to grow as administrators, gain credibility, and be perceived as leaders.

Assistant principals and servant leadership. While there is vast research about assistant principals, including new school administrators, there is a specific gap in research to understand the knowledge novice assistant principals have regarding servant leadership theory, skills, and resources. The research cited in the literature review indicated servant leadership is prevalent among superintendents, principals, and teacher leaders. Most research regarding assistant principals explores identity and roles (Carpenter et al., 2015; Finley, 2013; Salazar, 2015). Additional studies address the challenges for novice assistant principals (Armstrong, 2015; Celik, 2013; Militello et al., 2015). In comparison, the research for assistant principals who understand and uses servant leadership is minimal, but vital to discuss.

The perception of servant leadership being used among principals and assistant principals is supported in one study (Valdes, 2009). The study involved 179 principals and assistant principals in the Long Island, New York area. Fifty nine percent of the respondents were principals and 41% were assistant principals, specifically, assistant principals with more than three years of experience. Valdes (2009) concluded the administrators believed servant leadership attributes were present in assistant principal's work. Specifically, data indicated attitudes about servant leadership and best practices using servant leadership were prevalent among both principals and assistant principals. Valdes noted the study was a self-reflection for administrators, based on Greenleaf's servant leadership philosophy and the constructs developed by Spears.

Important to observe is how the study is indicative of the lack of research regarding assistant principals and servant leadership. Valdes's (2009) study is the only research, which designed a purposeful approach to understand servant leadership concepts being present among assistant principals. Even so, the study included assistant principals with three or more years of

experience. Valdes's research is central to the discussion of servant leadership being present among assistant principals. The research does not address the perception of servant leadership among novice assistant principals. In consideration of assistant principals moving into principal positions, researching whether servant leadership is viewed as a viable skill for future leaders is vital.

Assistant principals as leaders. A principal can readily identify the talent of assistant principals and use the skills and abilities in accordance with the needs of the school (Hilliard & Newsome, 2013). The skills gained by assistant principals can transfer to higher leadership positions and the leadership pipeline goes directly to principal from the assistant principal (Schulz, Mundy, Kupczynski, & Jones, 2016). Experiences of assistant principals served well as a training method for being principal, notably in operational practices of duties, scheduling, and working with staff (Kwan, 2013). Further analysis of assistant principals being familiar with servant leadership draws a comparison of the skills shared by principal and assistant principal. In a study comparing principal and assistant principal responsibilities, each group scored higher according to specific duties. Principals scored higher in leadership strands such as school management, community relations, and instructional leadership; assistant principals scored higher in operational strands such as student activities and pupil personnel (Schulz et al., 2016). Findings from the study indicate assistant principals can extend experiences to include best practices for leadership.

Chapter Summary

The literature review examined whether new assistant principals have knowledge about servant leadership. Research indicated servant leadership evolved from a theory to a tangible and measurable concept, which is used across a broad spectrum of organizations. The

experiential learning theory aligns with the literature review due to the desire for understanding the lived experiences and perspectives of new assistant principals (Kolb et al., 2001). Studies in servant leadership acknowledge a common style of leadership and recognize a positive impact (Parris & Peachey, 2013). Servant leadership is not an absolute concept yet is valuable for flexibility and adaptation to varied working environments. In educational organizations, servant leadership is evident among superintendents, school leaders, and a positive impact in school climate and culture (Williams & Hatch, 2012).

There is extensive research indicating how assistant principals faced the challenges of transition (Armstrong, 2015; Hoffert, 2015), forming identity (Carpenter et al., 2015; Militello et al., 2015), and role as a new leader (Barnett et al., 2012; Celik, 2013; Santacrose, 2016). Additionally, there is research indicating best practices to becoming a principal (Hilliard & Newsome, 2013; Joseph, 2014; Kwan, 2013; Schulz et al., 2016). There remains a specific gap in research discerning if new assistant principals are familiar with servant leadership. One study indicated principals and assistant principals have an awareness of servant leadership, both in perception and practice (Valdes, 2009). It is noted Valdes's (2009) study researched assistant principal's perception of servant leadership among experienced assistant principals.

Understanding the focus of servant leadership over transformational leadership is vital. The two theories share similar traits for organizational leadership, yet slight differences make for significant change in action. A servant leader emphasizes the good of followers over self-interests of the leader by valuing people, being authentic, promoting personal growth, and being purposeful in building community (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Contrary, transformational leadership emphasizes when leaders and followers collaborate to raise each other to higher than expected levels of success. The basis of transformational leadership

includes the following constructs: individualism, personal charisma, motivation, intellectualism (Washington, Sutton, & Sauser, 2014). Transformational leadership is a traditional leadership style, managed by a leader who focuses on outcomes (Bryant & Brown, 2016). Essentially, servant leadership seeks success for the organization by focusing on the individual while transformational leadership seeks success for the company by focusing on the organization (Washington et al., 2014).

Servant leadership implementation is varied and with an emphasis on the betterment of the individual. The literature review suggests servant leadership is used widely among educational organizations and leaders, yet there is minimal connection of servant leadership with novice assistant principals. A qualitative intrinsic case study has been designed to explore the familiarity novice assistant principals have with servant leadership and as a viable resource for the work environment.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of the qualitative intrinsic case study is to explore the familiarity of servant leadership concepts among 15 novice assistant principals in the Northern Virginia region. The study will determine how knowledgeable novice assistant principals are with the concept of servant leadership. Additionally, the research is necessary to understand what servant leadership traits are applicable as best practices for the work environment. The following research questions guide the qualitative intrinsic case study:

Research Question One: What is the level of knowledge novice assistant principals have of servant leadership theory?

Research Question Two: How familiar are novice assistant principals with servant leadership traits?

Research Question Three: What servant leadership traits are applicable as best practices for the work environment as identified by the sample of novice assistant principals?

The qualitative intrinsic case study will include components supporting a dependable and confirmable outcome. Sections of the chapter will provide detail for the design and rationale of each component. The qualitative intrinsic case study will be provide a suitable and appropriate format, which is reflective of the specific group, novice assistant principals. A purposeful approach in sampling will ensure reliable participant selection and valid outcomes. The role of the researcher will be as observer providing open-ended questions to the participants and as facilitator in the focus group. The research instruments are a face-to-face interview format, a Word table document, and a focus group. All will use a coding system to effectively categorize and analyze data. Protocols established by participating school systems will drive recruitment,

selection, participation, and data collection. Lastly, safeguards are taken to ensure compliance with ethical standards and to secure the privacy and safety of the participants.

Research Design and Rationale

A qualitative intrinsic case study will provide depth to understand the context for servant leadership used among novice assistant principals. The qualitative intrinsic case study research focuses on a phenomenon within real-life context (Lewis, 2015). The qualitative intrinsic case study will align with experiential learning and determine through lived experience the knowledge novice administrators have with servant leadership (Kolb et al., 2001). The qualitative intrinsic case study approach will provide an in-depth appreciation of a phenomenon in true context, and provide transferability of new knowledge (Burchett, Mayhew, Lavis, & Dobrow, 2013). A qualitative intrinsic case study can serve the dual purpose of being a research study to determine specific outcomes, as well as inquiring about a phenomenon for further understanding (Creswell, 2014).

The purpose of the qualitative intrinsic case study is to explore the familiarity of servant leadership concepts among 15 novice assistant principals in the Northern Virginia region. Servant leadership is a popular theory among corporate leaders, businesses, religious and secular foundations, and public service organizations (Parris & Peachey, 2013). Servant leadership has a viable role with educational leaders, specifically assistant principals. The rationale for completing the qualitative case study is to understand the firsthand experience and perspective of assistant principals. The qualitative intrinsic case study format is appropriate as a specific group, the novice assistant principals, will be interviewed to understand a specific phenomenon. The open-ended questions will allow for introspective thought and reflection. The qualitative intrinsic case study will focus on a unique phenomenon, specifically to understand if novice

assistant principals are familiar with servant leadership practices (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The interviews will collect firsthand accounts describing the responsibilities of assistant principal leadership while gaining in-depth perspective and reflection (Creswell, 2014).

The sample for the study will include 15 assistant principals from diverse public school systems in the Northern Virginia region. The sample population are novice assistant principals from varied socioeconomic environments and across elementary, middle, and high school placements. The advantages of implementing the qualitative intrinsic case study will be to understand whether servant leadership is a relevant and viable resource for assistant principals. Through transferability the data from the qualitative intrinsic case study can be generalized for leadership roles and reflection for best practices in education administration (Burchett et al., 2013). A qualitative intrinsic case study done in an interview format allows for inquiry, which is an anticipated benefit when understanding servant leadership in administrative roles (Creswell, 2014).

Role of the Researcher

The role for the researcher in the qualitative intrinsic case study will be as an observer and facilitator. The researcher is presently serving in a classroom teacher role and will not have any direct supervisory or administrative control over the participants. The researcher does have experience as both principal and assistant principal in a Maryland public school system. The sample population will be from Northern Virginia suburban school systems. The school systems support diverse communities with a minority–majority demographic (“Virginia School District Demographic Profiles,” 2018). The researcher is serving in a teacher role, which will eliminate the conflict of interest of serving in a dual role with participants. Additionally, the participants will not be chosen from the direct working environment of the researcher. The school systems

were chosen for proximity when doing the research, particularly when conducting face-to-face interviews. In the agreement, the participant will acknowledge there is not a professional or personal relationship with the researcher. Based on the criteria for permission to do external research with the two school systems, the privacy and anonymity for each participant is absolute. The procedure to ensure ethical standards and sharing the final analysis will follow the protocols per the National Institutes of Health (2012) and each school system.

Research Procedures

A qualitative intrinsic case study requires multiple steps to ensure reliability and validity. A purposeful approach to sampling, instrumentation, and data analysis will provide the best opportunity for accurate interpretation of the data. The qualitative intrinsic case study will provide an in depth look at a specific phenomenon to understand lived experiences. The period for completion of the portions of the study is as follows: a four-week period to secure the sample population, a five-week period to gather the data, and a five-week period to analyze and synthesize the data for the final dissertation.

Population and Sample Selection

The random sample for the study will include 15 assistant principals from diverse, public school systems in the Northern Virginia region. Respectively, the school systems border one another directly west and south of Washington, DC and are representative of the diverse communities of Northern Virginia (“Virginia School District Demographic Profiles,” 2018). Selection criteria is based on participants who have served three or less years as an assistant principal in the present school system. Novice assistant principals are eligible for the study if serving a combination of three years in multiple school systems. The selection process will

follow the protocols established by departments for evaluation and accountability in each school system.

When permission to conduct the research is granted, the researcher will work in conjunction with human resources departments for each school system to determine the candidate pool. Human resource departments based on the work experience of assistant principals not to exceed three years will generate the candidate pool. Access to the candidate pool will be granted by the school systems and communication established with the superintendent's designee and each school principal explaining the intent of the research. Initial contact with the candidate will be by e-mail to inform the candidates a letter will arrive detailing the research, including the informed consent letter (see Appendix C).

Instrumentation

Face to face interviews, a Microsoft word document, and a focus group discussion will be the instruments for the qualitative intrinsic case study. Participants will be asked newly developed, open-ended questions, which clarify prior knowledge of servant leadership and identify the servant leadership characteristics which best align with the work environment (see Appendix A). The interview questions were designed for the research based on an established instrument, the Servant Leadership Survey (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). The interview will be in a comfortable environment for the participant, with priority being to conduct the interview at the participant's work place. Participants will be given the option to conduct the interview via a secured, online platform such as Skype or Google Hangouts. Secondly, participants will be asked to complete a one-page Microsoft Word document, in table format, describing daily responsibilities in alignment with components of the Servant Leadership Survey

(van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). The new instrument is necessary to specifically align servant leadership traits with assistant principal responsibilities.

The second phase of the interview involves participants completing a Word document in table form. The document is aligned with the eight dimensions of the student leadership survey and serve as the preset coding categories (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Additionally, participants will be invited to attend a focus group conducted via webinar. The focus group format is designed to be open-ended in which a discussion regarding best practices will channel emergent codes emphasizing servant leadership, again, based on the student leadership survey.

Interview questions and focus group topics are drawn from the concepts developed in the Servant Leadership Survey (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Reliability and validity (see Table 5) of the Student Leadership Survey is based on exploration of 99 original items previously developed in servant leadership instruments (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). As determined by implementing Cronbach's alpha function, exploratory factor analysis, and content and criterion validity measures, the Servant Leadership Survey established a high rating of reliability and validity (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). The survey was completed in two qualitative measures and eight quantitative measures, leading to a study, which capably measures domains for both servant and leader (Rachmawati & Lantu, 2014). Ultimately, the Servant Leadership Survey incorporated 30 items within eight dimensions, which guide the interview questions and focus group. Table 5 indicates the reliability and validity measurements for the Servant Leadership Survey.

Table 5

Reliability and Validity of the Servant Leadership Survey (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011)

Scale	Reliability	Content validity	Criterion validity
Empowerment	.94	.90	Vitality .83
Accountability	.93	.70	Engagement .93
Standing back	.92	.95	Job satisfaction .73
Authenticity	.95	.93	Organizational commitment .94
Humility	.74	.94	Extra-role behavior .94
Courage	.91	1.08	Performance .84
Forgiveness	.90	1.05	Leadership clarity .84
Stewardship	.87	.91	

Protocols include previewing the format of the study, reminding the participant all data will be secured, reviewing the coding format to categorize data, clarifying the participant's consent and permission to withdraw, and the opportunity to review information (National Institutes of Health, 2016). The three instruments will provide a triangulated format sufficient to validate the data. Instrumentation for the study is based on the Servant Leadership Survey model, which was validated with exploratory factor analysis and multidimensional measurements, which lead to convergent validity (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011).

Data Collection

The collection of data in all phases will be collated and stored in a secure setting. Each participant will receive an individual jump drive on which to store the completed Word chart describing work tasks and responsibilities. Saved to the same jump drive will be the transcription of the interview. The interview will be transcribed from what is saved to a recording device, or what is directly downloaded to the hard drive when using Google Hangouts or Skype. Webinar platforms include storing capabilities for both written and audio transcripts, which will be downloaded to the individual jump drive of the researcher. Additionally, the

consent letter will be stored with the respective candidate's jump drive. Having the information on individual jump drives ensures reliability and validity by allowing participants the opportunity to check for accuracy.

Data Preparation

Purposeful sampling of data will strengthen confirmability and dependability (Nowell et al., 2017). Research documents will be prepared in Word formatting for expanding columns and rows as the participants document work experiences and responsibilities. Practice in using Skype or Google Hangouts, as needed, will ensure a smooth transcription from voice to text. Due diligence in choosing an online platform to create a webinar allowing written and audio recordings is appropriate for the focus group setting. Manual Coding will be in a line-by-line format to analyze preset and emergent codes.

Reliability and Validity

Qualitative reliability and validity concerns itself with the reality of the outcome and finding what is the truth or falsehood based on the data (Creswell, 2014). Reliability is the consistency of the findings and validity is the accuracy of the findings. A rigorous study producing reliable and valid outcomes establishes confidence in the research data. Using Cronbach's alpha formula and exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011) established high ratings for reliability and validity in the Servant Leadership Survey (see Table 5). Contrary to positivist thinking, validity and reliability can be expressed in alternate realms, which continue to provide accurate and consistent measurements (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). Alternate criteria to evaluate reliability and validity in qualitative research are respectively: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability

(Nowell et al., 2017). There are effective strategies to be implemented with each of the alternate methods, which will enhance the study.

There are numerous strategies within each realm of alternate criteria to explain reliability and validity. Methodological triangulation will be implemented to provide credibility, particularly by conducting face-to-face interviews, completing a one-page table clarifying best practices as an assistant principal, and an opportunity for a focus group via webinar. Transferability is the transferring of information to convey the viability of the data (Connelly, 2016). The strategy to be applied is a thick description of the data in a thorough and purposeful manner to support generalizability for the study (Nowell et al., 2017). Dependability is the third component providing trustworthiness to a study. Firsthand accounts from the participants is vital for valid and reliable data. The researcher will continuously appraise and reflect on the research to ensure compliance and alignment with the research design (Creswell, 2014). Lastly, confirmability via the member checking method will ensure the findings are reflective of the participant's perspective and not of the researcher (Creswell, 2014). The triangulated design of the research will reiterate, or confirm, the perspective of the participant.

Data Analysis

The data will be synthesized thematically aligning with servant leadership characteristics. Coding in qualitative studies is an integral part of interpreting the data to analyze and categorize the information (Campbell, 2015). Data will be drawn from the interview to determine the familiarity novice assistant principals have of servant leadership. Participants will be asked to complete a Microsoft Word table to detail the daily activities of the assistant principal to compare alignment with servant leadership traits. To gather data for communal themes, a webinar (see Appendix C) will be designed to gather data as a focus group. When necessary,

transcription will be extracted using voice-to-text in Google documents and reviewed for accuracy by the participant. Data will be analyzed manually and scrutinized by each line in the transcript. Open coding will reveal the work details of assistant principals and assist in the second step of axial coding, or conceptualizing, how the work of assistant principals aligns with servant leadership (Campbell, 2015). The data will reveal tangible practices and conceptual tendencies in servant leadership.

Vital to understand is servant leadership is a flexible concept adaptable to unique leadership situations (van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). To clarify how servant leadership is interpreted, coding will be qualified in both preset and emergent modes. Preset codes will be based on the eight servant leadership characterizations outlined in the Servant Leadership Survey for analysis with the interview and table activities. Emergent codes will be analyzed from data garnered during the webinar to determine how servant leadership is unique among the participants. A coding formula will be developed to explore concepts of servant leadership (Campbell, 2015). Data will determine which servant leadership traits are applicable when developing positive and supportive relationships with the stakeholders.

Ethical Procedures

Educational administrators are constantly in the public's eye and scrutinized for decisions. All precautions will be taken to provide a comfortable research environment and to protect the privacy of the participants. As per the guidelines of the National Institutes of Health (2012), the well-being, health, and privacy of the participant will be protected and secured. The consent letter will be comprehensive in nature to thoroughly describe participation and stipulations, including:

- Professional identification of the researcher
- Description of the project to include purpose, selection, procedures, and duration
- Procedures for confidentiality
- Compensation, or lack thereof
- Questions and voluntary approval by participant and opportunity to withdraw
- Storage of data in secure location and method of destroying data
- Sharing findings and feedback
- Resources for study: audio and video taping, secure storage of data
- Consent and signature (See Appendix C)

Ethical guidelines include the viability of the instruments for the study and the storage and security of data. Appropriate treatment of data is to include participants' names being replaced with anonymous titles, including during the webinar. Participants will be asked to sign in with an assigned, anonymous title. Appropriate storage of data will be saved to a password protected computer and jump drive. When the research and dissertation process has been completed, the participants will be notified the data has been destroyed. All precautions will be taken to be sure participants are not familiar with the researcher in a professional or personal setting by confirming such in the consent letter.

Chapter Summary

Administrators should prepare to be the caretaker for a positive learning environment, which includes a multitude of cultures, languages, and learning styles. The study is necessary as new assistant principals is tasked as stewards for a diverse leaning population. The purpose of the qualitative case study is to explore the familiarity of servant leadership among 15 novice

assistant principals in the Northern Virginia region. The procedure for the sample population and protocols for methodology and instrumentation are detailed and supported. Practices were discussed for maintaining quality research, accurate analysis, ethical standards and the sharing of the results. The study will contribute to servant leadership research by exploring the assistant principal experience, which will extend the knowledge base in educational leadership. The abject goal of the dissertation is to understand if servant leadership is a viable resource for novice assistant principals. The findings in Chapter 4 will indicate if novice assistant principals find servant leadership traits useful.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of the chapter is to review and analyze the findings of the qualitative intrinsic case study. The research instruments will indicate if servant leadership is a viable resource for novice assistant principals. The information will be organized into sections, which analyze each instrument. The data from each instrument will be categorized into preset codes aligned with the Servant Leadership Survey (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Evolving themes will lead to a discussion of concepts relevant to servant leadership.

The purpose of the qualitative intrinsic case study is to explore the familiarity of servant leadership concepts among 15 novice assistant principals in the Northern Virginia region. The interview, chart, and group discussion supported reliability and validity of the study by triangulation, thick description, and an audit trail. The research instruments were designed to address each research question.

Research Question One: What is the level of knowledge which novice assistant principals have of servant leadership theory?

Research Question Two: How familiar are novice assistant principals with servant leadership traits?

Research Question Three: What servant leadership traits are applicable as best practices for the work environment as identified by the sample of novice assistant principals?

The research was aligned with the eight traits established by van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011). The first instrument was an open-ended interview to explore the level of knowledge of servant leadership among novice assistant principals. In the second instrument, novice assistant principals completed a chart in which participant's listed daily practices aligning

with servant leadership traits. The third instrument was a focus group discussion regarding how servant leadership traits can be used in the daily practices of novice assistant principals.

The topics in the chapter include the means and processes for data collection, data analysis, findings, and evidence of reliability and validity. The discussion for data collection includes a description of the response rate including: the number of participants, the time frame for collection and response rate, the process for collecting the data, and any extenuating circumstances affecting the collection of the data. Data analysis will include a discussion regarding security of data, a basis for coding, and evolving themes. The findings from the qualitative intrinsic case study will conclude if the study stands up to consistency, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Lastly, a synthesis of the data will explore the emergent themes and alignment to the research questions.

Data Collection

Participants for the study were to complete each of the three instruments in the qualitative intrinsic case study. The solicitation and selection of 15 novice assistant principals with three or less years of experience took place among eight public school systems in the Northern Virginia area. A formal request was submitted to conduct external research in each school system's office handling internal and external research requests. Two school districts declined participation and three school systems indicated the approval process would take four to eight weeks. Three school districts permitted the study to commence immediately and to coordinate communications via the Office of Accountability. Communication was established with school system supervisors to develop a list of qualified candidates. Contact was made with each candidate via electronic mail to introduce the researcher, forward resources, and request written notice to decline or agree to participate in the study.

Among the three school systems who participated, contact was made with novice assistant principals identified as having served three years or less in the position. The school systems, which granted permission, are considered suburban districts with a diverse population of students and staff. A total of 54 participants whom qualified for the study. Seventeen novice assistant principals agreed to be part of the study, two above the expectation for the sample and establishing a response rate of 31%. However, as the study continued five of the participants did not complete all three stages, leaving a sample of 12 participants completing the study, or a 22% response rate. Table 6 indicates the response rate, which includes school systems, school level, number of qualified participants from each school system, number of participants who accepted, and the number of participants who completed the study.

Table 6

Participatory Rate

School system	Level	Qualified	Agreed	Completed
A	High school	4	3	3
	Middle school	5	2	0
	Elementary school	11	2	1
B	High school	9	4	4
	Middle school	3	3	1
	Elementary school	19	3	2
C	High school	1	1	1
	Middle school	1	1	0
	Elementary school	1	1	0

There was a six-week period for collecting the data, which included completion of all three instruments. Data was collected in three phases for the qualitative intrinsic case study, using three different instruments. Interviews were conducted and recorded in Skype or Google Hangout platforms. Each platform allowed for live communication and MP3 audio recording, which was then uploaded to a secure transcription platform. The transcription was then

transferred into the interview document (Appendix A) for analysis. The second instrument (Appendix B) was completed independently by the participant and sent back to the researcher via electronic mail. Files were kept for each participant in which the interview notes, recording, transcription, and chart would be saved. The third instrument included written responses from the participants via a webinar. The data was removed from the online webinar platform and were secured in the researcher's files.

An unforeseen circumstance was the clarity of the audio recording. Due to the audio being recorded from a live microphone and speaker, distortion was a factor in the actual recording. While the recordings were accurate, the written transcription averaged in the 80–90% accuracy rating. Therefore, while one can clearly hear what was said, the same was not true of the transcription. The distortion caused a slight deviation from the collection of data as detailed in Chapter 3. Additional time was planned to listen to the recordings and make corrections as needed to the transcriptions.

Data Analysis

Data was secured in a confidential manner which ensured participants had a comfortable environment in which to think and speak freely. The information for each instrument was coded differently than the participant's name. As a means of knowing the school levels for the data, high school participants were clustered as the A group, middle school participants were clustered as the B group, and elementary participants were clustered as the C group. Within each group and in no particular order, the participants were given a number. Of the participants who completed the study, there were four participants in the A group, seven participants in the B group, and one participant in the C group.

Data was prepared for analysis by completing the instrument documents. The document for the open-ended interviews (Appendix A) was used to document notes and combine transcriptions. For example, the response column was filled with notes from the researcher as the interview was taking place. Once the interview was completed, the audio recording was uploaded to the secure transcription service. Sections of the transcript were then transferred to the appropriate box in the document aligning with the questions. The question, notes, and transcription were aligned in rows relevant to the individual question, which allowed for observation in trends regarding novice assistant principals' experience and familiarity with servant leadership.

The second instrument was a Word document in table format (Appendix B). The table was designed to gain the perspectives of the novice assistant principals, specifically to explore the daily activities of the novice assistant principal and alignment with servant leadership traits. Participants completed the document independently and sent the document back with the code assigned by the researcher. The third instrument was prepared for analysis directly from the focus group discussion. The responses from the participants were documented and secured using the Skype for Business platform.

Themes evolved from a combination of preset codes. The preset codes were based on the servant leadership traits identified in the Servant Leadership Survey (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). The servant leadership instrument was chosen for a high rating of reliability and validity (Rachmawati & Lantu, 2014; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). The process for coding and identifying themes and trends was based on the content analysis model of Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003). In the process, specific steps were taken to observe trends and identify themes. For each instrument, transcripts were read line by line to observe similarities

and trends. Common topics were then color-coded in each data document, thus identifying emerging themes within the preset codes. Documents were created to observe trends and codes among the different groups. Table 7 indicates the codes and themes evident from each research instrument.

Based on the data recorded in the interview, novice assistant principals have minimal, direct knowledge regarding servant leadership. However, the data from the second instrument indicated novice assistant principals do embrace servant leadership traits. Novice assistant principals completed a chart in which the daily activities depicted were in alignment with servant leadership traits (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). The servant leadership traits served as the preset codes, which guided the thought process and perspective of the participants when listing daily activities and responsibilities. The following narrative identifies the research instruments and the themes, which emerged.

Instrument 1

Instrument 1 was the interview exploring the novice assistant principal's familiarity with servant leadership. An observation from the interviews was the lack of familiarity novice assistant principals had with servant leadership. One of the participants indicated an understanding of the servant leadership concept as serving others or putting one's self secondary (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2010). Participants claimed an awareness of servant leadership, primarily using the term "support." Participants described being supportive of staff, but most failed to describe the servant leadership theory or concept. The participants mentioned numerous leadership theories, notably: seven whom mentioned transformational, three whom mentioned authoritarian leadership, in addition to democratic leadership, totalitarian leadership, and distributive leadership.

Table 7

Preset Codes and Emergent Themes

Instrument 1: Interview	
Preset codes	Emergent themes
Empowerment	Encouragement from peers to move to administration
Accountability	Completing educational leadership programs
Standing back	
Humility	Working in the legacy of parents or mentors
Authenticity	
Courage	Never expected to have leadership position
Interpersonal acceptance	
Stewardship	A greater impact on the whole school
Instrument 2: Chart of daily activities	
Preset codes	Emergent themes
Empowerment	Provide professional development, support staff with resources, professional self-growth, student growth
Accountability	Observations, achievement, staff management
Standing back	Feedback, supporting projects, giving credit
Humility	Inclusive, reflective, giving credit, take responsibility
Authenticity	Modeling, frankness, mindfulness
Courage	Build consensus, initiative, improvement, change, resistance
Interpersonal acceptance	Understanding, mindfulness, reflective
Stewardship	Best interests of others, responsibility
Instrument 3: Focus group discussion	
Preset codes	Emergent themes
Empowerment	Necessary to support professional growth of staff
Accountability	Relevant as a skill towards observations and evaluations
Standing back	Giving credit where it is due to staff is empowering
Humility	Helpful with reflection
Authenticity	Being true to one's self
Courage	Interactions with staff for observation and professionalism
Interpersonal acceptance	Being human, reflecting on mistakes
Stewardship	Responsibility for the well-being of the staff

All participants indicated learning leadership theories in a survey course at the beginning of the leadership programs, but could not provide a working definition of servant leadership.

Participants made an earnest effort to explain leadership styles and numerous were mentioned,

but few of the novice assistant principals appeared accomplished in understanding servant leadership.

There were observable trends when analyzing the data from the interview. Each participant came from the field of education prior to pursuing an administrative position. Additionally, each participant pursued certification or a degree in leadership to be eligible for consideration in administration, thus experiencing the servant leadership trait of accountability. Five participants indicated having inspiration from an educator or receiving encouragement to pursue an administrative career, thus aligning with the servant leadership trait of empowerment. Contrary are six participants indicating having never expected or planned to become an administrator. A telling theme among nine of the participants was the comment related to the servant leadership trait, stewardship. Each participant indicated going into administration “to make a greater impact,” “to help on a larger scale,” “to help 1,400 people instead of just my class.”

Servant leadership themes surfaced when participants were asked to identify best practices of educational leaders and what strategies were to be better understood when first starting. Participants believed educational leaders must have specific skills such as sound instructional knowledge and being a strong communicator. Reflection from participants indicated wishing to have more knowledge of day-to-day activities such as bus duty, special education meetings, and doing observations. Novice assistant principals struggled with challenging conversations. The participants discussed not being prepared for tough conversations regarding differing philosophies with the principal, communicating with challenging parents, inadequate instruction, and addressing staff who were not adhering to policies or procedures.

Instrument 2

Instrument 2 was the chart of daily activities, which align with servant leadership. Greenleaf (1977) framed the original concept of servant leadership as serving others, and Laub (1999), Patterson (2003), and Spears (2010) identified tangible, servant leadership characteristics. Servant leadership instruments were developed to measure servant leadership attributes and worker satisfaction (Green et al., 2015; Parris & Peachey, 2013). Ekinici (2015) developed a servant leadership instrument identifying school principal leadership according to teacher perception. None of the servant leadership instruments address how servant leadership is perceived among new administrators. In the interview process, the participants for the study have indicated being unfamiliar with the full concept of servant leadership. As the participants completed the chart aligning daily responsibilities with servant leadership traits (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011), novice assistant principals were unknowingly implementing servant leadership traits. The traits from the Servant Leadership Survey (van Dierendonck & Nuijten (2011) were used due to the focus on both service and leadership. Participants aligned daily activities and responsibilities with the traits for the Servant Leadership Survey. The responses varied by each participant, but each person did make comments for each preset code. The preset codes listed as follows were supported with repeated comments from the participants and were categorized into themes.

Empowerment. As defined in the Servant Leadership Survey (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011), empowerment is “a motivational concept focused on enabling people and encouraging personal development” (p. 251). Based on the responses from the participants, themes generated which support the preset code for empowerment are professional development,

support with resources, professional growth, and student growth. Participant responses indicated a direct connection of servant leadership actions with students and staff.

Provide professional development. The participants from the high school level tended to comment supporting and offering staff members the opportunity to personally grow through professional development opportunities such as Advance Placement training, building professional growth opportunities on site, and seeking individual growth. Participants also mentioned seeking relevant, professional growth opportunities, in addition to growth in the classroom and with instruction. Participants emphasized onsite professional growth to build presentation skills.

Support with resources. Participants generally agreed empowerment is seen when offering staff specific resources. Examples from the participants were to forward instructional resources to the staff member, offer mentoring resources, support the creation of a math remediation program, and assist teachers in tracking achievement data. Participants acknowledged supporting staff with resources was the most prevalent and wide-ranging trait. Participants indicated supportive resources varied among instructional, professional, and leadership goals.

Professional growth. Novice assistant principals found numerous ways to empower staff via professional self-growth. Examples among the participants were to offer autonomy and self-discovery, and encourage individuals to seek higher levels of leadership such as committee chairs, education leadership programs, and National Board certification. Participants wrote about empowering people to be department chairs, serving on hiring committees, and assisting with leadership roles specific to the school.

Student growth. Participants acknowledged observing student growth as a servant leadership theme, which crossed varied realms of the school environment. Participants indicated how students were empowered to rise to higher expectations such as supporting the school student council and endorsing public speaking roles for students. A servant leadership action from novice assistant principals was to invite students to be part of decision making in the shift for restorative practices in disciplinary matters. Participants viewed student growth as a viable servant leadership theme when encouraging students to realize personal growth and academic improvement.

Accountability. As defined in the Servant Leadership Survey (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011), accountability is “holding people accountable for performance which can be controlled” (p. 251). Based on the responses from the participants, observations, achievement, and staff management were themes associated with the servant leadership trait of accountability. Participants responded to accountability with descriptions of job responsibilities, which affected individuals and the school as a whole.

Observations. The theme of observations was a strong indicator from the participants. A participant commented on keeping instructional staff accountable to specific domains in the observation rubric. Another participant mentioned doing observations as a way of addressing accountability, in addition to informal observations and walkthrough observations. Another participant commented on the importance of having accountability with special education staff, especially with compliance in the classroom and documentation. A participant indicated holding students accountable for disciplinary consequences and including restorative practices.

Achievement measurement. A noticeable trend was the theme of achievement. The participants offered varied examples indicating the effort to monitor achievement. Participants

acknowledged staff were accountable for establishing an annual professional plan to analyze student growth with specific and measurable data. Additionally, the participants indicated being accountable for monitoring and evaluating the professional plans. Accountability was measured in teachers and staff analyzing data for student growth. There were other accountability measures, specifically enrichment and remediation programs which the novice assistant principals monitored.

Staff management. Participants felt strongly about staff management, specifically regarding staff adherence to duties. A participant mentioned having staff be accountable by intensive use of calendars as a reminder about deadlines and meetings. It was also necessary to hold staff accountable to assigned duties such as cafeteria and hall duty. Participants the importance for staff to adhere to duty expectations. The participants acknowledged being accountable for the safety and security of the school, thus holding staff accountable to following policies and procedures.

Standing back. As defined in the Servant Leadership Survey (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011), standing back is “the extent to which a leader gives priority to the interest of others first and gives the necessary support and credits” (p. 252). Based on the responses from the participants, themes which developed were feedback, supporting projects, and giving credit. Participants responded positively when identifying work activities which resembled standing back.

Feedback. Participants indicated the theme of feedback was a servant leadership trait, which allowed staff to give input for decisions. By standing back, the novice assistant principal willingly received feedback regarding school initiatives and school wide programs. Participants

indicated feedback and polling as a vital means of developing inclusive practices and acknowledging the value of the staff member.

Supporting projects. Participants indicated a purposeful effort to support individuals and specific projects. An example is a participant who sought supporting Advance Placement teachers. Another participant explained identifying a need for school meals beyond school hours. A program was designed and implemented in which community stakeholders had the opportunity to get free meals as needed. Participants mentioned being supportive of staff to develop onsite professional development and maintaining a silent, but supportive role for staff to lead curriculum and department meetings.

Giving credit. Participants in the study made comments relevant to the theme of giving credit. Participants were purposeful in giving credit back where due. Staff and students were acknowledged for hard work and effort in varied activities such as student government associations, school initiatives, and site activities regarding achievement and instruction. Participants identified acknowledging school wide efforts, with one participant emphasizing the school motto, “It’s a WE Thing.” Four of the participants indicated a personal preference of giving credit instead of receiving credit.

Humility. As defined in the Servant Leadership Survey (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011), humility is “a motivational concept focused on enabling people and encouraging personal development” (p. 252). Based on participant responses subthemes such as inclusiveness, reflection, giving credit, and taking responsibility evolved. Humility had strong subthemes and were central to the participant’s responses.

Inclusiveness. Participants felt strongly about inclusivity as a subtheme of humility. The responses ranged from personal to group scenarios. Participants emphasized being “in this

together,” speaking in terms of “we,” and “no one person is better than the other.” Participants realized work is “not done in a vacuum and one must depend on others.” Collaboration was a key concept expressed by the participants when working towards success, improvement, and restorative processes. An evolving concept from participant responses was working and talking in the third person of “we.”

Reflective. Participants aligned humility with daily responsibilities and expressed reflection as an important subtheme for humility. In being reflective, participants related to staff experiences such as observations, remembering the daily challenges of being a teacher, and actively seeking understanding for cultural competency. Additionally, participants observed the importance to model modesty and freely admitting when not knowing something. Lastly, participants explained reflection is vital to assist in formally and informally acknowledging the accomplishments of the staff.

Giving credit. Participants acknowledged giving credit was an essential subtheme to be included with the servant leadership trait of humility. Participants indicated giving credit was an important contribution to the culture of the school and the motivation to work. Participants realized the importance to give credit “whenever possible” or “always.” Ideally, giving credit should be done as often and consistently as possible.

Take responsibility. Based on data, participants expressed ideas evolving into the subtheme of taking responsibility. The subtheme complements the other subthemes in rounding out the servant leadership trait of humility. Participants made comments such as “taking responsibility and apologizing” and “my opinions are based on my personal experiences.” Responses from the participants indicated a willingness to accept the challenges of being an assistant principal and working through solutions.

Authenticity. As defined in the Servant Leadership Survey (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011), authenticity is “expressing the ‘true self,’ expressing oneself in ways which are consistent with inner thoughts and feelings” (p. 252). Based on responses from participants, modeling, frankness, and mindfulness are subthemes, which complement the servant leadership trait of authenticity. Responses from participants indicated the subthemes developed from descriptions of personal characteristics.

Modeling. Study participants considered modeling important as a means of showing authenticity. Responses included “staying true to personal character,” “know personal leadership traits,” and “following my gut.” Modeling included using one’s own experiences to be authentic and to follow the school system professional guidelines. Modeling practices trend towards a person exhibiting the best of one’s personal characteristics.

Frankness/honesty. Participants in the study made comments representing the character of the participants. Comments show a range of personal reflections such as “I was very forthright in my opinion,” “work to be honest,” “what you see is what you get,” “always seek to be honest,” and “staff know that I am genuine and truly care about them.” Participants commented on citing rubrics for accuracy and incorporating self-evaluation as a means of stating frank or honest suggestions. The comments allowed insight about self-perception and deliberate actions by the novice assistant principals.

Mindfulness. Mindfulness is the process of being attentive in the present moment. The participants gave examples of how mindfulness is a subtheme supporting the servant leadership trait of authenticity. Participants gave examples such as being quick to apologize and being mindful of staying objective in communications. Participants also were mindful of sharing ideas

to build consensus and setting a positive climate. A participant found mindfulness a viable skill when processing observations and evaluations.

Courage. As defined in the Servant Leadership Survey (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011), empowerment is “a motivational concept focused on enabling people and encouraging personal development” (p. 252). Based on the responses from the participants, building consensus, showing initiative, and seeking improvement and change were important subthemes, which supported the servant leadership trait, courage. Participants displayed reflection and thoughtfulness when responding to the servant leadership trait of courage.

Building consensus. Participants found numerous strategies to move forward with challenging decisions and initiatives. Instead of “sticking to what has always been done,” participants used data and feedback to build consensus and “find a path forward.” A participant built consensus by talking with teachers and doing research to design appropriate programs for students. Another example is seeking input through established committees in the school. One more example of building consensus is a participant facilitating decision making, specifically to events, which include the whole staff such as graduation and orientation.

Initiative. Participants gave examples of personal and school wide initiatives. One participant gave the example of starting a summer remediation program. Other examples are a participant revamping the process for excusing tardies, building science competitions, and building morale and support. Another example for school wide initiative was to engage in leadership and strategic planning processes. Novice assistant principals take initiative to enhance the school with projects done in the best interests of students and staff.

Improvement, change, and resistance. Participants indicated improvement, change and resistance are interconnected. When seeking to make change, sometimes the novice assistant

principal faced resistance. Participants usually sought improvement in instructional methods or implementing more skills-based courses in preference to content courses. Additionally, participants sought to provide opportunities for students to complete programs in a flexible manner consistent with student interests and talents.

When seeking to make change, novice assistant principals faced challenges and resistance. The participants recognized change was challenging, especially when disagreeing with the principal or finding resistance to the ideas for change. However, the participants did indicate change can happen if one is willing to change as needed, and if one can find a cooperative team of teachers willing to help. Participants also expressed challenges in learning the ins and outs of departments, specifically special education, to understand better the process for change.

Interpersonal acceptance. As defined in the Servant Leadership Survey (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011), interpersonal acceptance is “the ability to understand and experience the feelings of others, understand where people come from and the ability to let go of perceived wrongdoings” (p. 252). Participants reflected on daily responsibilities in which understanding, mindfulness, and reflection were substantial subthemes for the servant leadership attribute of interpersonal acceptance. Participant responses indicated the subthemes developed from self-reflection and mindfulness.

Understanding. The participants in the study considered understanding an important concept to communicate and practice with the staff. Examples of understanding include “truth can be culturally relative” and to “regularly solicit feedback and input from committees of faculty and students.” Participants also included examples of understanding by using effective communication such as speaking to staff about professionalism and impacting students.

Mindfulness. Mindfulness is being attentive to the needs in the present situation. A participant was mindful when stating, “No significant learning can take place without a significant relationship.” Participants provided varied examples for mindfulness, such as “giving people the benefit of doubt,” “always listen to a person’s point of view,” and “everyone is different and has an asset.” Another example of mindfulness is a scenario provided by a participant in which the novice assistant principal realized a person was “speaking out of frustration and it is easy to lash out leadership.”

Reflective. When asked to list daily activities reflecting interpersonal acceptance, participants listed characteristics which embraced personal and professional reflection. Similar to mindfulness, participants listed scenarios in which attention to the moment was a priority. Participants mentioned being open to reflecting and changing perspective. An example is a participant who said, “It was important for me to put myself in their shoes.” Participants also mentioned reflecting with the staff in groups or as a whole to understand situations or processes.

Stewardship. As defined in the Servant Leadership Survey (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011), stewardship is “the willingness to take responsibility for the larger institution and go for service instead of control and self-interest” (p. 252). Based on the comments from the participants when completing the chart, the two subthemes of best interest of others and responsibility come to light as supporting the servant leadership trait of stewardship. Subthemes for stewardship evolved from the professional vision of the participants.

Best interests of others. Participants tended to be literal with the term “best interests” and mentioned often in responses. Participants mentioned making “decisions for the staff and thinking about what is in the best interests of students.” Participants mentioned, “school is about the kids” and “offering students a positive behavior system.” Essentially, participants wanted to

“prove with actions that leaders put the school above self” and think about “what is in the best interests of every person in the building.”

Responsibility. Participants generally agreed responsibility was an important perspective to the daily work of a novice assistant principal. Whether it was regarding students or staff, participants were cognizant of the responsibility laid upon them. An example is “all of the students, teachers, and staff are ultimately my responsibility.” Similar thoughts about responsibility were expressed: “take responsibility for the ups and downs of the school academic and cultural success,” “I think about what is in the best interests of every person in the building,” “I just want to make sure all students learn and have an opportunity to thrive and be successful,” and “putting the kids needs first is crucial, and seeing the big picture.” Participants’ comments were similar in acknowledging the role of the novice assistant principal and stewardship was embraced without being cognizant of the meaning.

Participant data provided depth and thick description of lived work experiences while being a novice assistant principal. The second research instrument allowed the participants to reflect on servant leadership traits. The participants explored servant leadership traits with present work scenarios and provided tangible examples of servant leadership alignment. Based on the responses from the participants, 26 themes developed from the work experiences of the participants. Novice assistant principals are unfamiliar with servant leadership theory but do use servant leadership traits in everyday work situations.

Instrument 3

Instrument 3 was the webinar discussion for servant leadership best practices. The intent of the focus group was to discuss the viability of novice assistant principals using servant leadership traits in daily work. Data collected from the webinar was analyzed to explore if

servant leadership tenets can be incorporated as best practices for novice assistant principals. The participants responded to the third research question about best practices for the work environment and took into consideration the eight servant leadership traits from the previous two instruments (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). The discussion centered around which traits best serve the school community and which traits serve the individual novice assistant principal. Questions for the focus group discussion centered on novice assistant principals reflecting whether servant leadership traits align with school system processes and fit individual work experiences. Participants were requested to respond at least once during the discussion and to respond minimally once to another member of the focus group.

Servant leadership for school initiatives. Data indicated novice assistant principals see the benefit of using servant leadership principles when implementing systemic initiatives. As a school plans for changes affecting the whole staff, participants reflected how servant leadership supports the decision-making and communication, which will build consensus for growth. Participants found empowerment useful when introducing the initiative for restorative practices with student discipline. Servant leadership worked for a novice assistant principal when “authenticity suited the staff while working through a new grading process.” Responses from participants indicated servant leadership tenets strengthened school wide processes such as monitoring student achievement, school wide leadership to facilitate meetings, and seeking input for master scheduling. Another participant stated, “Stewardship helped as I worked with a staff who experienced a death.” Participants were able to give examples how servant leadership traits can be applied to systemic issues. Responses to support servant leadership traits were “using empowerment to help our staff is a purposeful approach to support professional growth”,

“authenticity allows me to approach the staff with new initiatives,” and “when a job is well done, I see how standing back works now.”

Servant leadership for novice assistant principals. The participants in the qualitative intrinsic case study indicated servant leadership traits are a valuable resource for personal and professional growth. The participants indicated servant leadership traits aligned with certain administrative responsibilities. Participants were able to see how the characteristics of empowerment, accountability, standing back, humility, authenticity, courage, interpersonal acceptance, and stewardship assists with effective communication, build positive relationships, and build consensus among the staff. Responses from participants included “humility can serve me well every day”, “courage, in many ways, is a necessity every day”, and “an assistant principal needs to be real, or authentic to all people.” Responses also indicated novice assistant principals needed courage when having difficult conversations with veteran staff and with students with disciplinary issues. Novice assistant principals acknowledged conversations dealing more personally with parents and students were challenging and required much courage. A telling response was, “It took all the courage and nerve I had to let a parent and child know they did not qualify for graduation.” A trend observed among the novice assistant principals was being accepting of servant leadership and affirming usefulness in daily, administrative work. A participant indicated a better understanding of accountability through servant leadership enhances the professional relationship and builds trustworthiness.

Results

The data provided an in-depth view of novice assistant principals’ familiarity with servant leadership theory. The research instruments aligned with the servant leadership traits in the Servant Leadership Survey (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Each instrument was

specifically designed to answer a research question: the interview was to explore novice assistant principal's familiarity with servant leadership, a chart was completed independently by the participants to explore familiarity with servant leadership traits, and a focus group was used to discuss what servant leadership traits can be incorporated as best practices for novice assistant principals.

Familiarity with Servant Leadership Theory

Novice assistant principals have little understanding of servant leadership theory and are not familiar with servant leadership characteristics and tenets. When asked about leadership theories, participants acknowledged leadership theories were not in the forefront of daily thought. A discussion of leadership theories happened in a theory or survey course at the beginning of educational leadership programs. Participants mentioned "recalling grad discussions", "learned theory in grad cohort", "learned different types through admin degree", and "been awhile, by name?" Participants also mentioned a few leadership theories by name such as transformational, distributive, instructional, and authoritarian leadership. Participants explained background knowledge of theories, specifically what the meaning and purpose of the varied theories were. An example is a participant who was able to explain the purpose of transformational and distributive leadership.

When participants were specifically asked about servant leadership theory, the responses indicated much less familiarity. Participants generally answered by acknowledging having minimal knowledge of the concept, or by interpreting servant leadership based on the term itself. Participants who had minimal knowledge of servant leadership acknowledged having heard of servant leadership in leadership courses, but minimal knowledge of the concept. Responses by participants included "don't recall learning about it," "not a great deal of familiarity," "don't

know a whole lot,” “very little,” and “heard of term, but not talked about or worked towards.” However, participants were able to offer numerous and varied examples when describing servant leadership. One participant’s response echoes the responses from all when expressing “know very little, but taking title is to serve and support, be a careful listener, and respond professionally.” Examples from participants included: building and fostering relationships, serving stakeholders, doing tasks to help staff, making sure kids get best opportunity and teachers get support, being a careful listener, be pleasing, being accessible, being available, serving all, supporting staff, responding professionally, and being helpful.

Familiarity with Servant Leadership Traits

The second research question explored whether novice assistant principals were familiar with servant leadership traits. The instrument to gather data was a Word table document, designed in three corresponding columns. The first and second columns were preloaded respectively with the servant leadership term and the corresponding definition from the Servant Leadership Survey (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). A third was for participants to list the daily responsibilities aligning with the term and definition. When coding, the servant leadership traits served as preset codes and themes evolved from the participant responses. Participants responded to the preset codes in narrative format of writing short and extended responses.

The participants were not familiar with the servant leadership theory, but had in place best practices, which aligned with servant leadership traits. A range of two to five themes evolved from each preset code. The participants drew on experiences from the role of administrator, specifically from the perspective of being a novice assistant principal who was new to the job.

For a theme consideration, three or more responses were to be similar in nature, thus showing a trend. The themes evolved from the participants depicting the activities and responsibilities of a novice assistant principal. In all, 26 themes supported eight categories of servant leadership. All of the themes were indicative of novice assistant principals unknowingly acting as servant leaders. Table eight summarizes the emerging themes based on the lived experiences of the novice assistant principals. The emergent themes developed from the pre-set codes, which aligned with the eight servant leadership traits (van Dierendonck and Nuijten, 2011).

Table 8

Emerging Servant leadership themes from novice assistant principals' experiences

Servant Leadership Category	Emerging sub-themes
Empowerment	Provide professional development, support with resources, professional growth, student growth
Accountability	Observations, achievement measurement, staff management
Standing back	Feedback, supporting projects, giving credit
Humility	Inclusiveness, reflective, giving credit, taking responsibility
Authenticity	Modeling, frankness/honesty, mindfulness
Courage	Building consensus, initiative, improvement, change and resistance
Interpersonal acceptance	Understanding, mindfulness, reflective
Stewardship	Best interests of others, responsibility

Evidence of Reliability and Validity

The qualitative intrinsic case study sought to understand if novice assistant principals are familiar with servant leadership theory and traits. The trustworthiness of the study is dependent on validating the quality of the data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). For qualitative studies, the criteria to support a study as trustworthy are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The analysis of the data will: confirm the findings from the qualitative intrinsic

case study, support confidence in the outcomes, allow relevant transference to other settings, confirm findings will remain viable over time, and repeated in scholarly research.

Credibility

Credibility is confidence in the findings of the research (Nowell et al., 2017). The findings from the research will be credible if the information from the participants is honest and frank. There are numerous means in which to establish credibility. Triangulation is a method of gathering data from varied approaches (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). For the qualitative intrinsic case study, methodological triangulation included an interview, notes from the participants, and a focus group discussion. Member check was offered to each participant in addition to verbally confirming the responses from each participant. The researcher reviewed with the participant the written notes and the participant indicated the accuracy.

The findings from each instrument provided credibility for each of the research questions. The interviews confirmed novice assistant principals were unfamiliar with servant leadership. The field notes from the participants acknowledged novice assistant principals do incorporate servant leadership practices while working as administrators. The third instrument, the focus group, provided credibility through a discussion of servant leadership practices best suited for novice assistant principals.

Transferability

Transferability is a means for validating the study by seeing the outcomes transfer to other settings or contexts (Creswell, 2014). For the qualitative intrinsic case study, the means for validating transferability was by the process of thick description. During the interview, thick description was developed when asking questions regarding the educational background and professional experience of the participants. Detailed information from the participants depicted a

group of people who were knowledgeable and willing to convey best practices. The context of written or verbal responses by the participants is relevant for administrators in education, specifically novice assistant principals. The outcomes are relevant to the work conditions of novice assistant principals in any educational setting, thus the value of transferability.

Dependability

Dependability is the consistency of the findings in a long-term setting (Nowell et al., 2017). The findings of the qualitative intrinsic case study will establish dependability by solidifying an audit trail. Notes taken by the researcher during the interview confirmed accuracy. Corresponding transcriptions were cross-referenced on the interview page for confirmation. Participant responses were categorized into themes, which aligned with the servant leadership traits. The participant responses about education and the working environment support the study regarding how servant leadership traits can be used for educational purposes.

Confirmability

The findings of the qualitative intrinsic case study were transparent and drawn directly from the data. The findings from the data was due to using three instruments designed specifically to provide findings for each research question. Interpretation of the data was valid due to triangulation and thick description. When credibility, transferability, and dependability occur, confirmability is achieved (Nowell et al., 2017). By using three instruments to gather data, a sufficient audit trail had been created to confirm accurate and dependable data.

Chapter Summary

The qualitative intrinsic case study explored if novice assistant principals were familiar with servant leadership theory and best practices. There has been research to explore and quantify servant leadership in business, religion, and service organizations (Parris & Peachey,

2013). Additionally, servant leadership explored in educational leadership positions such as the superintendent, principal, teacher leader, and even online platforms. There is a gap in the literature regarding an assistant principal's familiarity with servant leadership. The research questions were designed specifically for the purpose of the study; to explore the familiarity of servant leadership concepts among 15 novice assistant principals in the Northern Virginia region.

The first research question explored the level of knowledge novice assistant principals have of servant leadership theory. The interview explored the background and experience of novice assistant principals. All the participants entered administration after completing a graduate, educational leadership program. When asked the level of understanding the participants had regarding servant leadership, most exhibited a minimal familiarity with servant leadership. Responses such as "don't recall learning about it," "not a great deal of familiarity," "don't know a whole lot," "very little," and "heard of term, but not talked about or worked towards" are data providing credibility to the research question.

The second research question sought understanding of the familiarity novice assistant principals had with servant leadership traits. While not being familiar with servant leadership theory, the participants were cognizant of best practices relevant to servant leadership. Each participant provided detailed examples, establishing 26 themes, which supported the eight preset codes. The data presented by the participants established thick description of each participant's experiences. The data was sufficient for establishing an audit trail, thus creating viable transferability.

The third research question sought input from the focus group as to what servant leadership traits are applicable as best practices for the work environment. The focus group were to identify the servant leadership traits applicable to the work environment of novice assistant

principals. Participants agreed each of the servant leadership traits; empowerment, accountability, standing back, humility, authenticity, courage, interpersonal acceptance, and stewardship has a place in the daily work of novice assistant principals. When asked to delve further in the traits as to which best support personal styles of leadership, the answers varied with each participant. The servant leadership traits mentioned as benefitting novice assistant principals were empowerment for the ability to guide aspiring administrators, accountability for relevancy to observations, evaluations, professionalism, and stewardship as the essence of all servant leadership.

In all, triangulation of the data verified credibility, thick description of the data created transferability, and the audit trail of all three instruments supported dependability and confirmability. Chapter 5 will indicate the impact the data will have in an educational leadership setting in which novice assistant principals are learning to use best practices to be an effective and caring leader. Interpretation of the data will conclude servant leadership is a viable resource for novice assistant principals. The outcome of the study will complement the research on servant leadership and enhance the understanding of a novice assistant principal's work and responsibilities.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, Recommendations

A paradigm shift in leadership has occurred through corporate businesses, service organizations, and education. Among the leadership styles, being adapted is servant leadership, a concept manifested in serving the organization and workers by supportive and empathetic means (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2010). Servant leadership is flexible in nature, thus allowing for personal and professional adaptation. Servant leadership has been adapted through multiple levels of leadership, but a gap in the literature exists regarding servant leadership being used in entry-level leadership positions. The nature of the qualitative intrinsic case study was to explore the impact servant leadership had among novice assistant principals and to consider if servant leadership was a viable resource for best practices.

The findings from the study indicated servant leadership is a viable resource for educational administrators, specifically novice assistant principals. Three research instruments were developed, each aligning with the servant leadership traits established in van Dierendonck and Nuijten's (2011) Servant Leadership Survey. The first instrument was an interview designed to explore if novice assistant principals had a basic understanding of servant leadership. The findings indicated novice assistant principals have a low level of knowledge regarding servant leadership theory. The second instrument, a chart completed independently by the participants, indicated novice assistant principals may not understand servant leadership conceptually, but do use servant leadership traits in daily responsibilities and practices. The third research instrument was the focus group discussion, which explored whether servant leadership traits are applicable as best practices for the work environment.

Findings indicated novice assistant principals generally consider all servant leadership traits viable when completing administrative tasks. Additionally, novice assistant principals saw

usefulness in servant leadership traits in conjunction with individual perspective. Novice assistant principals indicated favoring specific servant leadership traits such as: empowerment due to the desire to help staff grow professionally, accountability for alignment with observations and evaluations, humility as a resource for reflection, and stewardship as an all-encompassing concept for supporting and caring for the staff.

Interpretations and Conclusions

The literature review described how servant leadership is a wide spread concept used among organizations and individuals. In the field of education, servant leadership has been used throughout all levels including superintendents, principals, teacher leaders, and online platforms (Boone & Makhani, 2013; Ekinci, 2015; Noland & Richards, 2015). There is one study regarding the familiarity novice assistant principals have with servant leadership theory (Valdes, 2009). The purpose of the qualitative intrinsic case study was to explore the familiarity of servant leadership concepts among 15 novice assistant principals in the Northern Virginia region. The findings of the qualitative intrinsic case study confirm novice assistant principals have minimal, conceptual knowledge of servant leadership, but use servant leadership traits in daily occurrences. Additionally, research findings extend the belief servant leadership traits are a viable resource for novice assistant principals.

Interpretation of Findings from Literature Review

The literature detailed a novice assistant principal's perspective and work responsibilities. Initially, novice assistant principals felt overwhelmed and not well prepared for the daily rigor of being an administrator (Craft et al., 2016). Novice assistant principals experienced the full realm of confidence and doubt while working in isolation (Santacrose, 2016). Novice assistant principals felt there was little training in transition (Armstrong, 2015; Santacrose, 2016).

Assistant principals wished to make a significant contribution to make the school better, yet faced unexpected challenges such as lack of training, lack of understanding roles, and lack of time to learn responsibilities (Armstrong, 2015). For all the perspectives offered in the literature review, a consensus suggests assistant principals faced prohibitive challenges in the job transition.

The findings of the qualitative intrinsic case general interpretation confirm the struggles of novice assistant principals. The participants in the study commented about challenges when starting the position. When asked to reflect on the beginning stages of being an administrator, participants indicated being unprepared for the job. Participants expressed a desire to have a better understanding of daily responsibilities such as leading the staff in professional activities, collaboration, and daily duties. Additionally, participants expressed concern about the ability to write effective observations. The participants wanted to have better communicative skills, specifically when talking to staff about observations or personnel matters.

Conclusions Within the Conceptual Framework

Theoretical and conceptual frameworks differ in scope; a theoretical framework will have a broad scope and a conceptual framework will be narrow in focus (Creswell, 2014). The conceptual framework to research novice assistant principals was designed to have a narrow focus within the larger realm of servant leadership in education. The conceptual nature of the qualitative intrinsic case study was framed by the guidelines of the experiential theory of learning in which knowledge and understanding is gained due to work experience (Kolb et al., 2001). The concept aligns with the essential questions of the study in exploring servant leadership among novice assistant principals in the work environment. The findings of the

qualitative intrinsic case study describe the perception of servant leadership among novice assistant principals, which is within the realm of the conceptual framework.

The findings from the interview indicate novice assistant principals are not familiar with servant leadership theory. The responses ranged from not knowing servant leadership theory having discussions from leadership courses. One participant indicated understanding servant leadership as similar to transformational leadership. The conceptual framework of the research was to understand the perspective of the novice assistant principal. Within the conceptual framework, the findings indicate novice assistant principals desire to have an impact on a large scale but lack the understanding of being a caring leader through servant leadership traits.

The findings from the chart indicate novice assistant principals have unknowingly adopted and implemented leadership practices, which align with servant leadership traits. Each participant offered examples for best practices, which were representative of servant leadership traits. In all, 26 themes evolved as subgroups of established servant leadership traits. When provided the servant leadership terms and corresponding definitions, the participants were able to identify strategies and practices from daily responsibilities. The responses from the participants indicated servant leadership may not have been a familiar term, but daily practices certainly aligned with servant leadership characteristics.

The findings from the focus group aligned with the conceptual framework in the qualitative intrinsic case study. The discussion identified the servant leadership traits which best support the lived experience of novice assistant principals. The participants were asked which servant leadership traits might best serve as a resource or skill for novice assistant principals. A trend observed from responses indicated each of the eight servant leadership traits were useful in some form or another. Additional responses identified specific servant leadership traits such as

empowerment, humility, and stewardship as helpful in building the character and legitimacy of the novice assistant principal. The participants did not indicate any of the servant leadership traits as being useless or ineffective to the work of an administrator. The findings from the third instrument indicated servant leadership traits were a viable resource for the novice assistant principal.

Deliberate care was taken to insure data was not interpreted beyond the scope of the qualitative intrinsic case study. Quotes used for emphasis and to support a statement were taken directly from transcripts. Information received from the participants was interpreted strictly within the realm of the parameters for the qualitative intrinsic case study. The participants responded to three instruments, each respectively aligned to the Servant Leadership Survey (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). There were no additional servant leadership instruments incorporated, thus no interpretation beyond the scope and design of the qualitative intrinsic case study. Accuracy in the findings was due to triangulation; using three instruments to provide data across different realms of measurement. Additionally, by using preset codes aligned to the parameters of the qualitative intrinsic case study, the research remained focused and within boundary, thus allowing the interpretations and conclusions to remain within the realm of the study.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of a study are characteristics, which possibly affect or influence the findings from the research (Creswell, 2014). Limitations are factors the researcher cannot control, thus having an impact when interpreting the outcomes and drawing conclusions. Limitations can be subjective in nature and necessary to discuss if the validity and reliability of the study was compromised (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The limitations of the qualitative

intrinsic case study were sample size, lack of prior research studies, and the subjectivity of self-reported data. The factors can influence the transferability, credibility, dependability and confirmability of the data.

The qualitative intrinsic case study was to have a sample of 15 novice assistant principals from the Northern Virginia region. The research was conducted with 15 administrators who fit the criteria of being an assistant principal with three or less years of experience. Seventeen participants agreed to do the study, 15 participants started the study, but three did not complete the requirement for all three instruments. The final data used for analysis included a sample size reduced to 12 participants. The final sample for the qualitative intrinsic case study is minimally representative of the large population of school administrators.

A second limitation is the lack of research connecting servant leadership and novice assistant principals. As separate topics respectively, research on servant leadership and assistant principals had a vast amount of information in which to understand servant leadership theory and the perspective of novice assistant principals (Ekinici, 2015; Valdes, 2009). However, when seeking information of servant leadership related to assistant principals, there was very little information. Valdes's (2009) study is the only research, which designed a purposeful approach to review servant leadership concepts being present among assistant principals. Different from the qualitative intrinsic case study, Valdes's study did not include novice assistant principals. A lack of established research is a limitation for the present qualitative intrinsic case study.

Another limitation to consider is the subjectivity involved with self-reported data. It is a limitation when using self-reported data due to the challenge in verifying information (Creswell, 2014). The second instrument for the qualitative intrinsic case study was a chart for the participants to independently document daily activities, which align with servant leadership

traits. Possible biases manifested when questions were answered with selective memory or exaggeration to favor the participants or the organization. One must take into account the information conveyed from the participant is impacted by human behaviors such as having a challenging day at work, an imbalance of personal and professional settings, or time constraints with work.

Qualitative methodology produces descriptive information in which to understand the varied dimensions of the research and analysis (Creswell, 2014). Limitations in qualitative research is primarily with what cannot be quantified, instead focusing on the dynamics of social relations and human behaviors (Nowell et al., 2017). The limitations in the qualitative intrinsic case study were sample size, lack of prior research studies, and the subjectivity of self-reported data. In a qualitative intrinsic case study, factors can affect the transferability of the research. The limitations compromise the findings due to a lack of clarity in the data.

A purposeful and diligent effort was made to minimize discrepancies, which would influence the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the qualitative intrinsic case study. To ensure credibility, the methodology was designed to be triangulated in nature, thus the accuracy of collecting, cross-referencing, and analyzing the data across three realms of measurement. Additionally, transferability is the degree to which data is used in other settings. In the qualitative intrinsic case study, thick description ensured transferability. The interview questions detailed behavior and experiences, but also sets the context with the purpose of exploring the unique perspective of novice assistant principals. In turn, the experiences are meaningful to professionals in similar settings. Lastly, dependability and confirmability of the qualitative intrinsic case study is viable as each research instrument was designed for cross-

referencing and the findings securely stored for analysis. A significant audit trail among three instruments provided depth in data analysis.

Recommendations

Research indicates the importance for school systems and individual schools to focus on both achievement and school climate (Barnett et al., 2012). While achievement is a pressing topic to which school systems must continue to improve, the responsibility of a positive learning and working environment rests with educational leaders (Mattocks, 2016). Servant leadership, with a broad concept and flexible adaptation, is a viable resource for educational administrators. The implementation of servant leadership traits can assist in creating a positive work environment, be supportive of student achievement, and develop leadership skills for the educational leaders (McCannon, 2015). Servant leadership is a valuable resource when purposely making an impact to empower people and establish an empathetic and supportive environment (Parris & Peachey, 2013). Ideally, one must accept the role of steward and put others first if one is to see a paradigm shift in powerful and effective leadership.

The findings of the qualitative intrinsic case study lead to two recommendations; to develop a purposeful approach for policy and practice, and for further research of servant leadership among educators. The findings from the qualitative intrinsic case study indicated servant leadership theory is a valuable concept for novice assistant principals. The recommendation is for servant leadership to be used in a sustainable manner. Postsecondary educators must continue to emphasize leadership theories throughout graduate programs and not just as a cursory conversation in one theory course. Revisiting the servant leadership concept will be a consistent reminder for practical application and relevancy throughout leadership programs. In the same mode, servant leadership is a sustainable practice during mentoring

programs for novice assistant principals. The recommendation is for novice assistant principals to develop a personal action plan incorporating servant leadership traits for daily responsibilities. Following the process of experiential learning theory (Kolb et al. (2001), a reflective component is to be instituted as a means to reflect on work experiences, conceptualize how servant leadership skills can be adapted, and to put into action best practices for empathetic and supportive leadership.

The recommendation is for research to continue on the topic of novice assistant principal's use of servant leadership. There is research indicating the adoption of servant leadership among varied educational leaders, but there is a gap in the research indicating assistant principals are not familiar with servant leadership theory and traits. Recommendation is to continue qualitative studies, specifically among varied cultures to provide a well-rounded perspective on effectiveness. Additionally, quantitative studies to measure the effectiveness of specific servant leadership traits are to extend beyond this research. There are numerous servant leadership instruments indicating different results (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005; Laub, 1999; Liden et al., 2008; Rachmawati & Lantu, 2014; Sendjaya et al., 2008; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011). Additionally, there are numerous models of servant leadership, which may, when studied, provide a different perspective and contribute to servant leadership theory.

Implications

Implications from the study indicate a positive impact on multiple levels. The outcome from the qualitative intrinsic case study has positive implications for novice assistant principals when serving students and staff. The positive impact is twofold; novice assistant principals will be better prepared for being an administrator, and community stakeholders will ultimately

benefit from an effective and empathetic assistant principal. A positive impact from the qualitative intrinsic case study is the implication for further study of novice assistant principals and leadership capabilities.

In a rippling affect, community stakeholders benefit from a novice assistant principal who is empathetic and skilled as a servant leader. Student discipline can decrease when positive relations develop between the novice assistant principal and the student body (Sapienza, 2013). Additionally, student achievement can increase when the staff is empowered to come up with solutions (Best, 2016). When the administrator is trustworthy and supportive, the instructional staff feels positive and confident about the learning environment (Celik, 2013; Militello et al., 2015). Parents feel empowered and validated when administrators actively listen to concerns and act in the best interest of the child. When working as a servant leader, the novice assistant principal has the capability to facilitate the positive outcomes.

The implications from the qualitative intrinsic case study is to continue to research the phenomenon of novice assistant principals in relation to servant leadership. Expanding the foundation of knowledge regarding assistant principals and leadership theories is necessary to fill the literature gap. Specifically, servant leadership research in education and about novice assistant principals will broaden the empirical data for educational leadership. Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodology studies are necessary to measure the phenomena of transitioning to assistant principals as servant leaders. The implication of such is the better understanding of servant leadership as a viable resource for novice assistant principals.

The findings from the qualitative intrinsic case study provide understanding beyond previous research. The literature review indicated novice assistant principals' struggle with transitioning to the job and adapting to the rigor of administrative responsibilities. The findings

from the qualitative intrinsic case study indicated novice assistant principals are not familiar with servant leadership theory but are capable of implementing servant leadership traits. The findings indicated novice assistant principals believe servant leadership traits are a viable leadership tool. It is noted the findings from the qualitative intrinsic case study enhance the previous research as the data confirms novice assistant principals can make good use of servant leadership traits.

Conclusion

Greenleaf (1977) claimed the essence of servant leadership is to “serve first” (p. 9). Servant leadership has evolved from a singular concept to a broad theory with tangible characteristics. Servant leadership is no longer an abstract idea; empirical evidence regarding servant leadership supports a concrete theory. Servant leadership is a flexible concept capable of fitting varied environments and settings. Individuals and organizations have accepted servant leadership as a means to change the leadership paradigm towards one of empowerment, empathy, and support. Ideally, the essence of servant leadership is to serve first.

Assistant principals come into the position facing responsibilities learned when on the job. There is much to master regarding daily duties, handling student discipline, facilitating staff development, completing observations and evaluations, and supporting the initiatives of the principal and superintendent. From the perspective of teachers and students, an assistant principal is to be patient, calm, supportive, and caring. From the perspective of the administrative team, a novice assistant principal is to learn quickly, be resourceful, and hold people accountable to expectations. There is much expected of the novice assistant principal from vested stakeholders and the expectations are learned with very little training. To assist in the learning and the personal development, the novice assistant principal can embrace and employ the standards of servant leadership.

Discussion of servant leadership was minimal in survey courses in leadership programs. Novice assistant principals recall discussing servant leadership or interpreting meaning from practical experience. However, the data from the qualitative intrinsic case study indicated novice assistant principals implemented many of the servant leadership traits in daily responsibilities. Novice assistant principals understood the value of empowering staff, holding staff accountable to instruction, standing back during growth by the staff, realizing strength comes from humility, and being the steward for the school community. Novice assistant principals depicted administrators being altruistic and empathetic in nature. The administrative actions described by the participants in the qualitative intrinsic case study were best practices in servant leadership.

Essentially, novice assistant principals are following the original ideal by Greenleaf (1970). Within the daily activities of novice assistant principals is the ideal to serve first. Whether working with students, staff, or parents, novice assistant principals serve first by making decisions and taking action in the best interests of community stakeholders. Novice assistant principals accept the responsibility for stewardship of the staff and students. Novice assistant principals are anxious to learn the administrative duties usually not mastered until being a principal. However, the desire to learn about budgeting, personnel, and management is still not as important as the first leadership steps of being supportive, showing empathy and humility, and developing skills to act as steward for the larger community. A true servant leader cares about the well-being of the people.

The novice assistant principal has a powerful forum to make a great impact on the school. A novice assistant principal has immediate access to students and staff. The immediacy gives the novice assistant principal the opportunity to build a reputation based on trustworthiness, integrity, and humility. The eight servant leadership traits designed by van Dierendonck and

Nuijten (2011) are applicable to most decisions made by novice assistant principals. The key is for the novice assistant principal to be mindful of being a servant leader and embracing servant leadership traits.

Much has been explored regarding servant leadership and the qualitative intrinsic case study comes back to what Greenleaf (1970) initially said. A school administrator must serve in order to be a legitimate and authentic leader. Being an assistant principal is the first step in leadership and it is not too early to understand the principles molding a valued and trustworthy administrator. Servant leadership theory guides the novice assistant principal, and servant leadership traits assist in making decisions in the best interests of the students, staff, parents, and community.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Question	Response	Preset coding servant leadership indicators empowerment, accountability, standing back, humility, authenticity, courage, interpersonal acceptance, stewardship (van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011)
Summarize your background in education and administration.		
Why did you choose to become an assistant principal?		
Describe leadership theories with which you are familiar.		
Describe your familiarity with servant leadership.		
Describe best practices for educational leaders?		
What are some strategies you wish you were more knowledgeable of when first starting as an assistant principal?		

Appendix B: Cross-Referencing Assistant Principal Duties With Servant Leadership Traits

Servant leadership trait	Characteristic of servant leadership traits	Assistant principal activities align
Empowerment	A motivational concept focused on enabling people and encouraging personal development	
Accountability	Holding people accountable for performance which can be controlled	
Standing back	The extent to which a leader gives priority to the interest of others first and gives the necessary support and credits	
Humility	The ability to put one's own accomplishments and talents in a proper perspective	
Authenticity	Expressing the "true self," expressing oneself in ways which are consistent with inner thoughts and feelings	
Courage	Daring to take risks and trying out new approaches to old problems	
Interpersonal Acceptance	the ability to understand and experience the feelings of others, understand where people come from and the ability to let go of perceived wrongdoings	
Stewardship	The willingness to take responsibility for the larger institution and go for service instead of control and self-interest	

Appendix C: Informed Consent Letter

Title of Project: A Qualitative Study to Explore Perception of Servant Leadership
Among Novice Assistant Principals

Dear [Participant],

You are invited to participate in a research study. The research project is being conducted by David B. O'Neill in partial fulfillment of a doctoral program at American College of Education. The research is being completed among 15 novice assistant principals in the Loudon County, Fairfax County, Prince William County, and Stafford County school systems.

The purpose of the qualitative case study is to understand if assistant principals are familiar with servant leadership theory and the servant leadership traits can be a viable resource in educational leadership. It is vital to the study to establish candidates are new or novices as assistant principals. The benefits to the research can be immediately transferred to educational leaders, specifically towards being an empathetic and conscientious leader. Specifically, the findings of the study can directly impact new assistant principals suggesting best practices and a theoretical foundation in the new role as administrator. The consent form includes detailed information on the research to help you decide whether to participate in the qualitative case study. Please read it carefully and ask any questions you have before you agree to participate. The procedures to implement the study are as follows:

- Request permission from school systems to conduct a case study with novice assistant principals in the Washington D.C. area
- Seek eligible candidates through the human resources department or professional development programs for administrators
- Contact eligible candidates with introductory letter and informed consent letter
- If agreeable, conduct the research in a face-to-face interview and focus group, to include;
 - a comfortable setting for the participant, i.e., assistant principal's office
 - interview can be completed via Skype or Google hangouts
 - interview consists of 5-6 open-ended questions about servant leadership
 - participant will be asked to complete chart detailing responsibilities and duties
 - easily accessible technologies to document data

Audio taping will be a resource used in the interview and focus group. The audio files will be transcribed to word documents for coding and categorization. The participant will have the opportunity to review information for accuracy. It is estimated the interview will be completed in 20 minutes, the Word table document will be completed in 15 minutes, and the focus group completed in 30 minutes. A total commitment is in the one hour and 15 minute range. The interview will be scheduled at the participant's convenience and the focus group will be scheduled in a timely manner to accommodate the group.

There is minimal risk in the research study and participation would be within the range of common, daily activities such as communicating, writing, and reflecting. The researcher will make the strongest effort to ensure the information you provide as part of the study remains confidential. Your identity will not be revealed in any presentations or publications resulting from the research study. You will be contacted should the researcher learn anything new during the research study which might affect your continued participation. Keep in mind, during the

group setting the researcher will request all group members to keep the information heard confidential. All data will be stored in a secure setting, notably in password protected files on a password protected computer. The data will be saved until the research project is complete, at which point all participants will be notified of it being destroyed.

Your participation in the research study is completely voluntary. A stipend for participation is not available and no costs will be incurred by the participant. Should the participant wish to participate via online platforms such as Skype or Google Hangouts, guidance will be provided to upload the free technologies to a computer. If you agree to participate now and change your mind later, you may withdraw at any time by stating in writing your wish to withdraw and the date to enact the withdrawal. The researcher may choose to terminate your participation in the research study if the participant is non-compliant in completing the research instruments after numerous notifications from the researcher of the timeliness of project.

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, David B. O'Neill at david.oneill@educate.ace.edu, and 301.643.5067. The project has been reviewed and approved by the Internal Review Board at American College of Education. The results of the research will be disseminated at the dissertation defense and posited in dissertation data bases, i.e., ProQuest. An approximate time for the participant to expect feedback from the research is Spring, 2018.

Thank you for your consideration!

CONSENT

I have read and understand the above information. I agree to participate in the study and I have received a copy of the form, signed.

Participant's printed name _____

& signature _____ Date _____

Researcher printed name _____

& signature _____ Date _____