

LEADING SPIRITUALLY:  
PUBLIC SCHOOL LEADERS PROMOTING COLLECTIVE  
TEACHER EFFICACY

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by

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LEADING SPIRITUALLY: PUBLIC SCHOOL LEADERS PROMOTING  
COLLECTIVE TEACHER EFFICACY

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Doane University, 2023

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Collective teacher efficacy (CTE) has the greatest, positive effect on student achievement (Hattie, 2021). Spiritual leadership is a proven, effective leadership style for school leaders. This grounded theory study addressed the gap in current literature connecting spiritual leadership and CTE by exploring how spiritual leaders, in a public school setting, promote CTE. Ten titled, building level leaders from United States public schools, who self-identified as spiritual leaders were recruited as participants. Data were collected through semi-structured, individual interviews. Interviews and analysis occurred concurrently in a constant comparison model to saturate the emerging categories of the grounded theory. Transcripts were coded for leading spiritually, enabling components of CTE, and for the essence of each line. Codes co-occurring with leading spiritually were organized into four emerging themes: mindset, human connection, higher calling and actions. All codes were continuously analyzed, sorted and resorted into emerging themes and categories creating the grounded theory. There are five components to the grounded theory from this study: development over time, purpose/focus, disposition, human connection, and actions. Through the process of growing and changing, a spiritual leader identifies a purpose and leads with a focus on something greater than oneself, reflecting spirituality through actions and human connection.

*Keywords:* spiritual leadership, spirituality, collective teacher efficacy, public school, effective school leadership, grounded theory

## DEDICATIONS

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. First, to my children, Lucas and Ellie, my hopes and prayers are that you know you can do anything you set your mind to.

Lucas, you have an incredible gift to see the world in different ways and a passion to make this world a better place. Ellie, you have an amazing heart of determination that will carry you to great heights. Both of you make this world a better place to be and just like you cheered me on in the pursuit of this degree, I will be here to support, love and cheer you on in whatever dreams you chase after. I love you both!

To Josh, my husband, thank you for supporting me through the best and worst of the last six years. Your belief in me and your encouragement when I was stressed made this milestone possible. Thank you for taking care of the kids while I was physically and/or mentally away, and I look forward to the memories we will continue to create as a family. I love you.

Dad and Lori, thank you for being my unwavering cheerleaders. Dad, you taught me the values of putting in the hard work and loyalty to self and others. The completion of this milestone is a reflection of those values, and I am overwhelmed with gratitude for your teaching and modeling of these values. I pray that I continue to make you proud; I love you.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As a public school administrator, I walk into the school doors not shedding my spirituality because my spirituality is a part of who I am. I bring my whole self to work and carry my values at the core. I seek purpose and fulfill my life's calling by serving others in a public school building. My lived professional experience includes the void of acknowledging spirituality within both leaders and staff in public school buildings. To me, there is an importance to advance student academic outcomes, and also to acknowledge and foster the spiritual well-being for others by leading a more holistic work community.

### **Statement of the Problem**

As seen in research literature, United States society is spending more time at work and is seeking purpose and community within the workplace (Fry, 2008; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). Ecklund et al. (2020) found one in five people “see their work as a spiritual calling” (p. 8). Identifying work as a spiritual calling provides an opportunity for leaders in the private and public sectors to consider not only the needs of the business, but also employees' inner, spiritual needs (Ashmos & Dunchon, 2000; Chen & Yang, 2012; Fry, 2003; Houston & Sokolow, 2006). Spiritual leadership approaches leading in a holistic sense, focusing on values and beliefs as those values and beliefs pertain to leading others (Houston & Sokolow, 2006; Reave, 2005; Samul, 2020). There are over 5,000 peer reviewed studies found on the ERIC database on the topic of effective school leadership styles (Akan, 2013; Ingersoll et al., 2017; Leithwood et al., 2008; Robinson et al., 2009). Many of these leadership styles focus on the traits and skills of a leader rather than the values, beliefs, and behaviors of a leader. Fry (2003) developed the

spiritual leadership theory (SLT). Leaders who embody the SLT have a positive effect on organizational commitment (Reave, 2005; Samul, 2020), organizational citizenship behaviors (Chen & Yang, 2012; Kaya, 2015; Udin, 2019), productivity (Reave, 2005; Samul, 2020; Udin, 2019), motivation (Fry et al., 2006; Reave, 2005), and organizational trust (Terzi et al., 2020).

Schools are the primary place where students go to learn. In a 2022 search of Google Scholar, there were over 17,000 articles of research within the preceding three years demonstrating the importance of strong leadership and school conditions allowing students to achieve at higher academic levels (Hattie, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2006). Internal and external conditions have varying effects on student achievement (Hattie, 2021). Collective teacher efficacy (CTE) was found to have the greatest positive effect on student achievement (Arzonetti Hite & Donohoo, 2021; Hattie, 2021). Albert Bandura (1997) defined collective efficacy by advancing the social cognitive theory from self-efficacy to how efficacy applies to an organization. Conditions identified in research that support and foster collective efficacy overlap in spiritual leadership. There is, however, a lack of existing research and literature in connecting spiritual leadership with CTE.

The goal of the current study was to explore connections between spiritual leadership and CTE to begin to fill the current gap in research literature: how spiritual leadership among public school administrators, in the United States, promotes CTE. Interviewing and analyzing the data from interviews provided insight into how current leaders, who identified as spiritual leaders, intentionally or unintentionally promoted a sense of collective efficacy among the teaching staff. In analyzing the interview data, the researcher captured how elements of spiritual leadership may have promoted the

occurrence of CTE, thereby providing a framework for leaders to intentionally employ to promote CTE within the school setting. The findings also allow leadership development programs to further understand the enabling components of CTE displayed through the spiritual leadership framework; therefore, further demonstrating the need to include the spiritual leadership framework in leadership development programs as an effective leadership framework to adopt as a public school leader.

### **Purpose of the Study**

As both CTE and spiritual leadership prove effective in supporting success in higher student achievement, research on how school leaders utilize the elements of the SLT to promote CTE within school buildings is advantageous. The purpose of this grounded theory study was to explore how spiritual leadership among public school administrators, in the United States, promotes CTE. In this study, semi-structured interviews of 10 building administrators, across Nebraska, who worked in a public school setting and who self-identified as spiritual leaders were conducted for the purposes of exploring how spiritual leaders promote CTE amongst the school staff. Spiritual leadership is generally defined “as comprising the values, attitudes, and behaviors that are necessary to intrinsically motivate one’s self and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership” (Fry, 2003, p. 711). The analyzed data from the interviews was used to create a grounded theory to demonstrate how spiritual leaders promote collective efficacy. The grounded theory can be used as a model or reference for other school building leaders and leadership development programs.

## **Research Questions**

The central research question for this study was: How do spiritual leaders, in a public school setting, promote CTE? The two guiding questions that ensured the central research question was answered were:

1. How is decision-making impacted by a spiritual leader's self-acknowledged spirituality in a public school setting?
2. What actions do school administrators take to promote the components of CTE?

An interview protocol (Appendix A) was developed and used during the semi-structured interviews to answer the guiding and central research questions.

## **Definition of Terms**

The following list provides definitions for key terms used throughout this study:

*Altruistic love*: “a sense of wholeness, harmony, and well-being produced through care, concern, and appreciation for both self and others. Underlying this definition are the values patience, kindness, lack of envy, forgiveness, humility, selflessness, self-control, trust, loyalty, and truthfulness” (Fry, 2003, p. 712)

*Collective efficacy*: “a group's shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainment” (Bandura, 1997, p. 477)

*Collective teacher efficacy*: “a staff's shared belief that through their collective action they can positively influence student outcomes, including those of students who are disengaged and/or disadvantaged” (Arzonetti Hite & Donohoo, 2021, p. xv)

*Faith*: “the conviction that a thing unproved by physical evidence is true” (Fry, 2003, p. 713)

*Hope*: “a desire with expectation of fulfillment” (Fry, 2003, p. 713)

*Hope/faith*: combined in this study to mean “the source for the conviction that the organization’s vision/purpose/mission will be fulfilled” (Fry, 2003, p. 713)

*Inner life*: “the extent to which one has a spiritual practice” including spiritual values that influence the choices a person makes (Fry, 2008, p. 117)

*Spiritual Leadership*: “comprises the values, attitudes, and behaviors that are necessary to intrinsically motivate one’s self and others so they have a sense of spiritual well-being through calling and membership” (Fry & Cohen, 2009, p. 269)

*Spirituality*: the connection to one’s inner self that searches for a purpose and meaning in life and beyond, as well as in daily work (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000)

*Vision*: a clear and compelling picture of “where the organization wants to be in the near to distant future” (Fry, 2003, p. 711)

### **Summary**

According to the research introduced in this chapter, the SLT and CTE, separately, demonstrate positive effects on organizations and student outcomes in research and literature (Bafadal et al., 2018; Hattie, 2021). At the time of the study, current peer-reviewed educational literature lacked the connection between spiritual leadership and CTE, which the current study attempted to bridge in a qualitative, grounded theory study. Through interviews and data analysis, results provided a framework to inform how spiritual leaders in a public school setting promote CTE and can be used by current and future educational leaders and leadership development programs.

In the following chapters, current research literature is presented to outline spirituality, spiritual leadership, effective school leadership, social cognitive theory and CTE. These ideas are brought together to demonstrate an overlap in qualities and effects of spiritual leadership and CTE. Chapter 2 outlines the gap in current literature among spiritual leadership and CTE. Chapter 3 outlines the necessity of a qualitative methodology and grounded theory approach in the current study, who the participants were, how the participants were recruited, and how the data was collected, analyzed and validated. Chapter 4 outlines the findings and Chapter 5 concludes the study with a discussion of results and implications for future research.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review covers the scope of the peer reviewed literature regarding spirituality and Fry's (2003, 2005, 2008) spiritual leadership theory (SLT), effective school leadership, and leads into Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory and Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo's (2021) work outlining collective teacher efficacy (CTE) and the enabling components of CTE. The elements of literature are then brought together to present connections between spiritual leadership and CTE to demonstrate the commonalities and linkages between spiritual leadership and CTE and to show a necessity in further research to fill the current gap in research literature: how spiritual leadership among public school administrators promotes CTE.

### **Spirituality & Spiritual Leadership**

Transcendental spirituality is a measure of spiritual leadership that identifies four main leadership dimensions, primarily used in servant leadership, supporting a type of spiritual aspect to leading (Sendjaya, 2007). The four dimensions are religiousness, interconnectedness, sense of mission and wholeness. Sendjaya (2007), from Australia, defined transcendental spirituality as "behaviors that manifest an inner conviction that something or someone beyond self and the material world exists and makes life complete and meaningful" (p. 113). Sendjaya (2007) outlined transcendental spirituality by utilizing Fry's (2003) landmark work on the SLT. Though Sendjaya (2007) included religiousness as a component of transcendental spirituality, the current research defined spiritual leadership without the dimension of religiousness to be aligned with Fry's (2003, 2005, 2008) SLT. Fry's (2008) revised spiritual leadership model does mirror the

transcendental aspect of Sendjaya's (2007) work by adding the inner self as a foundational component.

Fry's (2008) theory stated a necessity of "collective tolerance" (p. 114) for the different aspects of an inner/spiritual life so everyone is able to experience meaning and purpose through work without feeling ostracized. Fry (2005) demonstrated how the SLT was developed based on "universal or consensus values distilled from thousands of years of human experience through religion and philosophy as well as the results of emerging scientific research on positive human health and well-being" (p. 75).

### **Spirituality vs. Religion**

Houston and Sokolow (2006) described the difference between religion and spirituality as "form and substance" (p. xxiii). Religion can be named: Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, or something that has no connection to a religious faith. Spirituality, on the other hand, is the substance that embodies or puts meaning to the names/religions. The connection to one's inner self searches for a purpose and meaning in life and beyond, as well as in daily work (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). Fry (2005) noted spiritual well-being is pursued universally and is found in every religion in some form as well as outside of religion. The pursuit of spiritual well-being is about serving others (Fry, 2005). Fairholm (1997) also made a distinction between spirituality and religion where spirituality is a person's intangible self where one creates morals and values. Religious overtones may be included; however, religious beliefs do not need to exist for spirituality to be present. According to Ashmos and Duchon (2000), spirituality exists in everyone and needs nourishment even in the workplace. As Bstan-'dzin-rgya-mtsho [Dalai Lama] (1999) explained:

Religion I take to be concerned with faith in the claims to salvation of one faith tradition or another, an aspect of which is acceptance of some form of metaphysical or supernatural reality, including perhaps an idea of heaven or *nirvana*. Connected with this are religious teachings or dogma, ritual, prayer, and so on. Spirituality I take to be concerned with those qualities of the human spirit--such as love and compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, a sense of responsibility, a sense of harmony--which bring happiness to both self and others. (p. 22)

Fry (2003) concluded that “spirituality is necessary for religion but religion is not necessary for spirituality. Workplace spirituality and spiritual leadership can therefore be inclusive or exclusive of religious theory and practice” (p. 706).

### **Spiritual Leadership Theory**

Fry (2005) and Tombaugh and Tombaugh (2009) discussed the use of spiritual leadership in combating poor decisions amidst the rise of unethical decision-making in the business world. Tombaugh and Tombaugh (2009) noted that spiritual leadership without spirituality is simply leadership. When there is a focus on spiritual leadership as a strategy or avenue to empower others to foster a particular working environment, then the meaning and power of this leadership style is lost. Tombaugh and Tombaugh (2009) argued first, the leader must have a “quest for personal spiritual transformation” (p. 109). The argument that a spiritual leader starts with personal spirituality is contradicted by Reave (2005), who stated, “a person does not have to be spiritual or religious to provide spiritual leadership” (p. 663).

Through the analysis of leadership styles literature, in particular transformational leadership, the key difference between transformational and spiritual leadership is spirituality and the concept of self-transcendence; therefore, spiritual leadership must begin with a leader's inner life. Fry (2008) explored inner life in the revised causal model of spiritual leadership (Figure 1) where the acknowledgement of inner life is the foundation of the SLT. The SLT model shows the inner life of a leader leading to altruistic love, hope/faith, and vision. Altruistic love, hope/faith, and vision in turn lead to spiritual well-being demonstrated through a calling and sense of membership. Ultimately, the spiritual leadership theoretical model leads to positive individual and organizational outcomes. A leader who cultivates an "inner life or spiritual practice will be more likely to have or want to develop the other centered values of altruistic love and a transcendent vision of service to key stakeholders and the hope/faith to 'do what it takes' to achieve the vision" (Fry, 2008, p. 113).

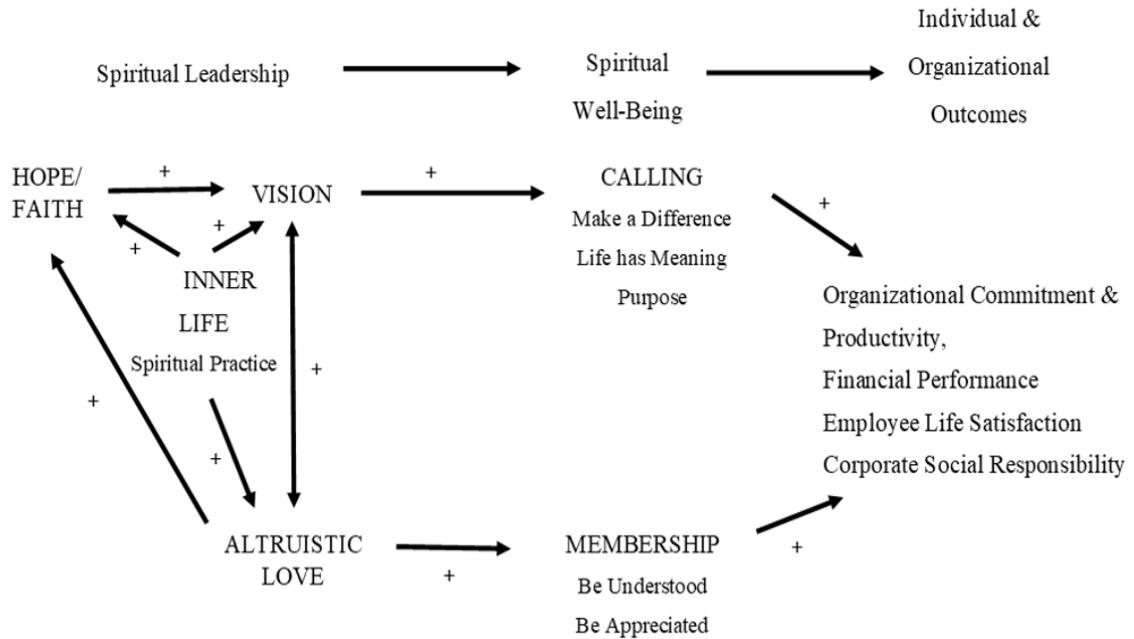


Figure 1. *Revised Causal Model of Spiritual Leadership* (Used by permission from Fry, 2008)

Fry (2003, 2005) combined the beliefs and behaviors of leading spiritually into a cause-and-effect model where the elements of altruistic love, vision, and hope/faith create a community where followers find a sense of membership and calling. Fry (2008) revised the SLT model to include “inner life” as the foundation for a leader. A leader must have spiritual practices to nourish one’s soul to develop hope/faith, vision, and altruistic love in others (Fry, 2008). Hope/faith, vision, and altruistic love then lead to spiritual well-being where organizational members make a difference and are called to the work and feel appreciated and understood as a member of the workplace.

Fry’s (2003, 2005, 2008) SLT was tested and validated in other studies (Fry et al., 2005; Fry et al., 2007; Malone & Fry, 2003). Each of these studies varied in size, methodology and setting. Spiritual leadership has a positive and significant relationship with organizational citizenship behaviors: altruism, sportsmanship, conscientiousness,

and civic virtue (Chen & Yang, 2012; Kaya, 2015). Reave (2005) completed a meta-analysis examining the relationship of spirituality and leadership effectiveness. Reave's (2005) study found many of the values of spiritual leadership are also effective leadership practices linked to employee satisfaction, motivation, and productivity.

Benefiel et al.'s (2014) meta-analysis confirmed that spirituality has a positive influence on organizational commitment, job satisfaction, performance, and productivity. Özgenel and Ankaralıoğlu (2020) used a relational survey model, in Istanbul, to explore teacher perceptions of spiritual leadership in determining an effect on school culture. Özgenel and Ankaralıoğlu's (2020) findings demonstrated that as teacher perceptions of spiritual leadership increase, so do the perceptions of school culture. Adopting the SLT practices demonstrates a positive influence to creating a sustainable workplace (Samul, 2019).

In Indonesia, Udin (2019) found a positive, significant correlation between spiritual leadership and "followers' task performance, knowledge sharing behaviors and innovation behaviors" (p. 8). Spiritual well-being is also correlated with positive physical and psychological health, specifically related to allostatic load (Ryff & Singer, 2002). Furthermore, in Indonesia, Bafadal et al. (2018) found spiritual leadership as a significant influence on student achievement. "Upon closer examination, spiritual leadership may be the catalyst that empowers exemplary school leaders to perform in meaningful, productive ways that link the caring aspect of leadership with the need to increase student achievement" (Zaharris et al., 2017, p. 90).

## **Elements of Spiritual Leadership Theory**

Taking a closer look at Fry's (2003, 2005, 2008) SLT, there are five elements of the model sustained through the leader's inner life. The inner life, also described as spiritual practice, is "a fundamental source of inspiration and insight, [that] positively influences the development of (1) hope/faith in a transcendent vision of service to key stakeholders and (2) the values of altruistic love" (Fry, 2008, pp. 111-112). The elements of vision, hope/love, altruistic love, calling and membership are outlined in the following sections.

### ***Vision***

The first component of Fry's (2003) SLT is vision. Vision is foundational to which the next four components rely (Taghizadeh & Shokri, 2015). Vision is a clear picture of the future; the who, what, where, when, why and how of an organization's most immediate journey to a goal (Fry, 2003). In Iran, Taghizadeh and Shokri (2015) cited visioning as having high leading and low dependence power and is the cornerstone to organizational and spiritual leadership. Fairholm (1997) described that leaders not only need to lead from the mind but lead from the heart which comes from an inner life or spiritual practice. In doing so, a spiritual leader's vision is at the core of leadership action and decision-making. "Visions come from the central core of the leader and reflect (or come to reflect) the central core of the group" (Fairholm, 1997, p. 28).

### ***Altruistic Love***

Fry's (2003) definition of altruistic love is a "sense of wholeness, harmony, and well-being produced through care, concern, and appreciation for both self and others. Underlying this definition are the values patience, kindness, lack of envy, forgiveness,

humility, selflessness, self-control, trust, loyalty, and truthfulness” (p. 712). Fairholm (1997) described altruistic love as care for others. If a leader holds a sense of inner life, then a leader will care for the professional and personal needs of the followers through action and decision-making. Fairholm (1997) summed up the idea of altruistic love with the following:

Deep caring is the cornerstone of spiritual values. It is a kind of reverence for others and for our common activities. Reverence is treating all people with deference and respect. Reverence is a continuum of behaviors including politeness, caring, and respect. It is holding others in esteem. It is genuine kindness and politeness. Reverence consists of dedication, eagerness, and enthusiasm. There is deep admiration in reverence, a kind of devotedness. Reverence is an intensified state of commitment—a goal for leaders. In many powerful respects, leadership is nothing more than developing a reverence for mission, products, customers, employees, and all other stakeholders. (p. 56)

### ***Hope/Faith***

Faith is the belief, or the knowing, that what is believed to be true, is true (Fry, 2003). Hope, in the realm of an organization, is the positive expectation a mission or vision will be met. When faith and hope exist in an organization, the members believe in the mission and expect to achieve the goals (Fry, 2003). In Fairholm’s (1997) look at leadership philosophies, a characteristic found in common among many philosophies and necessary in spiritual leadership is affirmation. Fairholm (1997) described affirmation as a type of optimism a leader holds while leading and making decisions.

### ***Sense of Membership***

As Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009) analyzed research around meaningfulness, the researchers found when participants felt a connection to and a sense of belonging with colleagues, meaning is experienced in the work. Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009) outlined the importance of the interconnectedness of employees in a working environment where individuals can feel belonging and care for others. Fairholm (1997) outlined the shift of the United States culture away from more familial and church-structured homes where people are now seeking a sense of community from the workplace.

### ***Calling/Meaning***

Through Sendjaya's (2007) description of spiritual dimensions, spirituality in the workplace is described as a means of filling a purpose in which an individual is called to rather than holding a job. Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009) looked at meaningful work in the business sector and found in the literature, meaningfulness is a subjective judgment on the part of an individual and the value an individual places on the work to do; meaningfulness exists when the work aligns with and/or fills an individual's values or purpose. Ecklund et al. (2020) found "about one fifth of U.S. workers see their work as a 'spiritual calling'" (p. 300). Looking at meaningfulness through the lens of spirituality, Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009) make an argument for meaningfulness to have a transcendent component. The transcendent component in what an individual finds meaningful goes beyond selfish desires and is found in the greater good. Lips-Wiersma and Morris's (2009) work supported Fry's (2003) intrinsic motivational model of spiritual leadership; meaning is made through a collective creation of vision and goals and through ownership in the vision and goals is where individuals make meaning.

## Effective School Leadership

According to the Canadian studies by Leithwood et al. (2006) and Leithwood et al. (2008), leadership is the second strongest factor influencing student outcomes; classroom teaching is the only factor above leadership. Hallinger's (2011) analysis of studies regarding school leadership found school leaders to be a mediating or indirect factor in positively influencing student achievement. According to Hallinger's (2011) study, leaders are able to positively influence student outcomes through building shared visions and goals, creating academic systems and focusing on the people of the organization.

Leadership is widely researched, and many styles and theories of leadership are identified; however, instructional and transformational leadership are the approaches most commonly cited in educational literature (Robinson et al. 2008). Amanchukwu et al. (2015) stated, "Despite the many diverse styles of leadership, a good or effective leader inspires, motivates, and directs activities to help achieve group or organizational goals" (p. 6). As outlined in Hattie's (2021) meta-analysis, school leadership has a medium effect size ( $d=.34$ ) on student achievement; however, Hattie (2021) explained the effect size is an overall look at leadership and stated that different types of leadership styles and dimensions have differing effects on student achievement. In India, Sudha et al. (2016) found "collective efficacy was significantly and positively related to the leader's effectiveness" (p. 115). Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo (2021) identified five related first-order factors that enable conditions for CTE and state that in order for CTE to exist in an organization, the supportive leader must foster the other four enabling conditions for CTE.

## **Instructional Leadership**

Ingersoll et al. (2017), found instructional leadership has a statistically positive significant effect on student achievement after all other factors are controlled. Goddard et al. (2015), found a positive and statistically significant relationship between instructional leadership and CTE. In addition, instructional leadership, with a focus on frequent monitoring and providing feedback of instructional practices has a strong relationship with teacher collaborative practices (Goddard et al., 2015). Furthermore, Hattie's (2009) analysis demonstrated the dimensions of instructional leadership to have a greater effect on student outcomes than transformational leadership dimensions.

Robinson et al.'s (2008) meta-analysis of transformational and instructional leadership styles coincided with Hattie's (2011) findings. Robinson et al. (2008) found instructional leadership to have three to four times greater effect on student achievement than transformational leadership. The difference in instructional and transformational leadership styles, stated by Robinson et al. (2008), is likely to occur due to the stronger student focused dimensions of instructional leadership versus the teacher focused dimensions of transformational leadership. However, Shatzer et al. (2013) noted that in Robinson et al.'s (2008) meta-analysis, controlling for international context, there is a much lower difference between instructional and transformational leadership styles and the effect on student outcomes. The study by Shatzer et al. (2013) supported the findings of instructional leadership having a greater effect on student outcomes than transformational leadership; however, this difference was noted as slight. Furthermore, according to Shatzer et al.'s (2013) study, leaders have a stronger impact on student outcomes than the school contexts in regards to both types of leadership styles.

Transformational leadership becomes a stronger mediating factor to student achievement and is more valued by teachers; therefore, increasing teacher satisfaction, input and collaboration (Hattie, 2009).

### **Transformational Leadership**

Unlike instructional leadership, transformational leadership focuses on empowering teachers, establishing consensus, inspiring followers and providing a shared vision (Akan, 2013; Amanchukwu et al., 2015; Robinson et al., 2008; Shatzer et al., 2013). Cruickshank (2017) described transformational leadership as a way of leading from the bottom up to create intrinsic motivation among the people involved in creating the school's vision and goals. As cited in Hattie's (2009) *Visible Learning*, transformational leadership focuses on the teachers and collective effort more than on direct academic outcomes.

Transformational leadership has a high effect on organizational learning, effectiveness and culture, as well as collaboration, teacher commitment and collective teacher and self-efficacy (Robinson et al., 2008; Ross & Gray, 2006; Sudha et al., 2016). In Turkey, Koçak and Özdemir (2019) outlined multi-frame leadership orientations; one being the cultural-symbolic frame. The cultural-symbolic frame is associated with transformational leadership with an emphasis on creating a common vision and supporting a collaborative and empowered environment. Koçak and Özdemir (2019) concluded the symbolic frame has a strong correlation and predictability to CTE. Focusing on relationships, shared visioning, and empowering others, transformational leadership is used most widely in literature to compare and contrast the spiritual

leadership style (Reave, 2005; Smith et al., 2018; Tombaugh & Tombaugh, 2009; Zaharris et al., 2017).

### **Instructional & Transformational Leadership connecting to Spiritual Leadership**

Bafadal et al. (2018) connected instructional and spiritual leadership stating instructional leadership is important for the advancement of teaching practices while spiritual leadership is important because spiritual leadership is “the energy possessed by the principal as an exemplary figure in work, discipline, and full of responsibility” (p. 156); both instructional and spiritual leadership were found to have a significant influence on positive student outcomes. In regards to transformational leadership, Fairholm (1997) stated, “Spiritual leadership extends and broadens values based transformational leadership ideas” (p. 79).

Özgenel and Ankaralıoğlu (2020) researched spiritual leadership through the perceptions of teachers. A piece of Özgenel and Ankaralıoğlu’s (2020) findings demonstrated spiritual leaders are “appreciated, respected, rewarded, in solidarity, communicated in a healthy way, they strive to fulfill their duties and responsibilities, and they are willing to solve problems” (p. 155). Özgenel and Ankaralıoğlu (2020) found as teacher perceptions of spiritual leadership increased, so did teacher perceptions of school culture. According to Benefiel et al. (2014):

“They [Fry et al., 2005] argued that spiritual leadership theory offers a springboard for a new paradigm of leadership theory, research, and practice given that it incorporates and extends transformational and charismatic theories as well as ethics- and values-based theories (e.g., authentic and servant leadership).” (p. 180)

A leader, therefore, with certain characteristics seen in specific leadership theories, are able to draw people together and enable sources of collective efficacy to promote positive organizational outcomes (Arzonetti Hite & Donohoo, 2021; Hattie, 2021).

### **Collective Efficacy**

Collective efficacy is an expansion of Albert Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory. In the classic theoretical model, individuals are assumed to have human agency or control over actions and have the ability to shape the future (Bandura, 1997). Using the social cognitive theory model, efficacy is what an individual, or a group, believes can be accomplished together. Collective efficacy is not the sum of the individual efficacy of each person in the group, rather collective efficacy is the efficacy or belief in the group as a whole (Bandura, 2000). Though collective efficacy is not the sum of the individuals' self-efficacy, the findings of Cansoy and Parlar (2018) from Istanbul showed a significant and positive relationship between teacher self-efficacy and CTE. Bandura (1997) defined collective efficacy as "a group's shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainments" (p. 477). In school settings, CTE is bound to the system in which teachers believe, as a group, there is the ability to achieve certain goals together such as student achievement (Goddard et al., 2000). In expanding the social cognitive theory from an individual's efficacy to collective efficacy, Bandura (1997) applied the four sources or experiences people use to build efficacy: enactive mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and affective states.

### **Enactive Mastery Experiences**

Enactive mastery experiences are the most powerful of the four sources in building efficacy (Goddard, 2001). Enactive mastery experiences focus on successful experiences individuals have. By finding and experiencing authentic, first-hand success, the next time an individual is confronted with the same or similar situation, a more optimistic attitude and perseverance are more likely to occur even in the face of adversity (Bandura, 1997). As Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo (2021) explained, “Efficacy and achievement alternate as causes and effects. As a sense of efficacy results in increased performance, better permanence outcomes further strengthen collective efficacy, which results in additional increases in performance” (p. 8). In the school environment, an enactive mastery experience is prior student achievement. When the students in a school increase academic performance, teachers begin to believe what is occurring in classrooms is making a difference. The connection of increased student achievement to teacher practices, motivates teachers to continue to improve to see increased results (Arzonetti Hite & Donohoo, 2021; Donohoo et al., 2018; Goddard, 2001). The more a teacher experiences mastery success, the higher the sense of CTE becomes (Koçak & Özdemir, 2019).

### **Vicarious Experiences**

The second source of efficacy building is vicarious experiences. Vicarious experiences are experiences observed by an individual including experiences an individual encounters and then sees others are getting similar and/or better results with the same actions (Bandura, 1997). For example, when a teacher observes another teacher with the same challenges, successfully implementing a new teaching strategy, a teacher is

more likely to believe in the success and effectiveness of the new strategy in another classroom. An example of vicarious experiences within a school setting is instructional rounds where teams of teachers and administrators observe other teachers, reflect and discuss the outcomes (Arzonetti Hite & Donohoo, 2021; Goddard & Skrla, 2006).

Strahan née Brown et al.'s (2019) research results from England reiterated the importance of vicarious experiences in the theme of learning. Two efficacy-shaping ways of learning were identified by the teachers in Strahan née Brown et al.'s (2019) study: observation followed by feedback and discussions and team meetings where collaboration is emphasized.

### **Social Persuasion**

Social persuasion is the third source of building collective efficacy according to Bandura (1997). Social persuasion is limited in power to have long lasting effects if an individual is not also experiencing success or does not have the necessary training to find success (Goddard & Skrla, 2006). Receiving positive appraisal and encouragement from a trusted and respected individual will raise one's perceived abilities and lead to an increase in effort and probability of success (Bandura, 1997). Furthermore, social persuasion is not just about "cultivating people's belief in their capabilities, they structure activities for them in ways that bring success and avoid placing them prematurely in situations where they are likely to experience repeated failure" (Bandura, 1997, p. 106). Strahan née Brown et al. (2019) reinforced social persuasion in research where communication is to be influential on enhancing CTE in schools. In Strahan née Brown et al.'s (2019) research, teachers stated that the performance feedback received positively influenced CTE when the feedback came from trusted colleagues.

## **Affective States**

Affective states refer to the emotions evoked during an experience or a thought of an experience (Bandura, 1997). The more negative the emotion (i.e., stress and concern), the less efficacy-building the experience is, and having a more optimistic and hopeful emotion attached to an experience or event allows for efficacy to be built (Arzonetti Hite & Donohoo, 2021; Bandura, 1997; Donohoo et al., 2018). Bandura (1997) stated, “Induced positive mood enhances perceived efficacy, whereas induced despondent mood diminishes it” (p. 112). In Strahan née Brown et al. (2019), the theme of stress management was found; teachers described the desire for stress management guidance, structures allowing for stress reduction, and indicated levels of collective efficacy aiding in feeling less isolated in negative emotions. Strahan née Brown et al.’s (2019) study demonstrated the reciprocal effect of CTE and positive affective states where the feeling of CTE creates positive emotion and likewise, positive emotion builds CTE.

Enactive mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and affective states, as found in the following review of CTE literature, are seen in the conditions leaders support to promote CTE in school buildings. CTE is an important element in school settings to promote student growth and achievement. Hattie (2021), found a positive correlation between CTE and student achievement (1.36 effect size). Hattie’s finding is consistent with previous research: CTE as a significant predictor of student achievement (Bandura, 1993; Goddard et al., 2000). In addition to positive student outcomes, CTE is found to have a positive, significant relationship with teacher influence, teacher leadership, school cohesion, school support, and shared goals (Derrington & Angelle, 2013; Goddard 2001; Ross et al., 2004).

## **Enabling Conditions of CTE**

Noting the positive impacts of CTE on the school environment, there is an importance placed on school leaders to promote the conditions which enable CTE (Donohoo et al., 2020). Donohoo et al. (2020) completed a study which “provides evidence in support of a factor model with five related first-order factors that describe the enabling conditions for CTE: Empowered Teachers, Embedded Reflective Practices, Cohesive Teacher Knowledge, Goal Consensus, and Supportive Leadership” (p. 161). Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo (2021) outlined the five conditions in the book *Leading Collective Efficacy: Powerful Stories of Achievement and Equity*.

### ***Goal Consensus***

The first condition Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo (2021) articulated as promoting CTE is goal consensus. Goal consensus was outlined by Donohoo et al. (2020) as an enabling component of leadership to support the development and maintenance of CTE. Ross et al. (2004), from Canada, and Kurz and Knight (2004), from the United States, found goal consensus to be the best predictor of CTE, almost double the predictive value of the weakest variable tested. Leithwood et al. (2008) cited one of the four common leadership practices of successful leaders is building a vision and establishing a shared purpose. Furthermore, one of the six powerful leadership dimensions cited by Robinson et al. (2009) through the analysis of 31 articles was setting educational goals. Robinson et al. (2009) described goal setting’s objective as finding a discrepancy between the current reality and the desired outcome so members are motivated and challenged while knowing there is capacity to meet the goals. Furthermore, Robinson et al.’s (2008) meta-analysis found the establishment of goals had a moderately high and significantly positive effect

on student outcomes especially when goal setting is completed in collaboration with others.

Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo (2021) outlined the experience of a school, Maine Township, where goal alignment had positive effects on low socioeconomic student ACT scores over the course of seven years. The positive effect of building a vision on student outcomes was also reported in Cruickshank's (2017) research on school leadership and student outcomes. Ingersoll et al. (2017) concluded that "fostering a shared vision for the school" (p. 22) is one of the top three leadership dimensions to have the strongest positive relationship to student achievement.

Goal consensus is sometimes referred to as shared vision, where a collaborative process is necessary in developing a vision (Arzonetti Hite & Donohoo, 2021). In order to gain investment from everyone, setting school goals and visions must include staff involvement where all voices are heard; without the investment, people become frustrated or anxious with the change as the school moves towards reaching the set goals (Arzonetti Hite & Donohoo, 2021). Goal consensus provides a voice and clarity for school staff while building consensus, collective efficacy and a sense of ownership. The element and actions of goal consensus lead into Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo's (2021) second enabling condition for CTE, empowered teachers.

### ***Empowered Teachers***

When thinking about efficacy and the ability to control an outcome, giving input and having an influence on the decisions being made in the organization are important. Both Ross et al. (2004) and Donohoo et al. (2020) concluded that teachers must have influence over decisions that affect things like curriculum and curriculum materials,

professional development, and building level policies, to share a sense of CTE.

Derrington and Angelle (2013) found a strong, positive relationship between teacher leadership and CTE as long as teacher leaders are self-identified and not appointed by the school leader. In addition, Derrington and Angelle (2013) found teachers oftentimes take on informal leadership roles where extra effort is made to make sure the vision is seen through.

Creating instructional leadership teams and inviting teachers to take part in the school improvement processes are proven to be effective in empowering teacher leadership and are associated with improved student outcomes (Ingersoll et al., 2017). Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo (2021) stated, “to foster teacher empowerment, leaders must shift their mindset about teachers as the *target* of improvement efforts and recognize that teachers—particularly teams of teachers—are the *drivers* of school improvement” (p. 49). When teachers and leaders are on the same page and have a common understanding, the next enabling component of CTE can be seen: cohesive teacher knowledge (Arzonetti Hite & Donohoo, 2021).

### ***Cohesive Teacher Knowledge***

As cited in Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo (2021), cohesive teacher knowledge refers to how much colleagues know what is occurring in one another’s classrooms and agree upon the effectiveness of academic practices. In order to build cohesive teacher knowledge, collaboration is imperative. Cohesive teacher knowledge emphasizes *learning* from one another and uniting as a team. A collaborative environment creates an empowered culture that Bandura (1997) described in which teachers not only have vicarious experiences and social persuasion but supports the elements of “hope and

optimism because it is impossible to strive for a more positive future without vision and a belief in what is possible to achieve” (Arzonetti Hite & Donohoo, 2021, p. 57). Ross et al. (2004) concurred with Bandura (1997) and Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo (2021). When teachers are aware of what is occurring in others’ classrooms and feel a sense of cohesion, there is a higher chance of social persuasion to build CTE (Ross et al., 2004). Cohesive teacher knowledge is also supported by affective states when teachers are able to empathize with one another and trust that each other understands the experienced emotions and struggles (Donohoo et al., 2020).

### ***Embedded Reflective Practices***

The fourth enabling condition to promote CTE, according to Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo (2021), is embedded reflective practices. Leaders must look for formal and informal ways for teachers to reflect at all levels. Some examples from Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo (2021) include team meetings, common formative assessment practices with reflection in professional learning communities, instructional rounds, and instructional coaching. Embedded reflective practices build trust and collegiality needed in both social persuasion and vicarious experiences. Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo (2021) stated that leaders get to own feedback as a reflective practice; giving teachers feedback and teachers accepting feedback is only possible when teachers trust and believe in the leader.

Donohoo et al.’s (2020) analysis of conditions for CTE found when teachers analyze and reflect on data together, not only is self-confidence built, but confidence in one another is also built as a collective while experiencing vicarious learning. Donohoo et al. (2020) stated, “embedded reflective practices are at the heart of teachers’ collaborative

work. Teachers become empowered, build consensus on goals, and develop greater cohesion when reflection in light of student evidence is embedded in their common practices” (p. 161). School leaders play an important role in setting the structures and ensuring the reflective practices are occurring (Donohoo et al., 2020).

### ***Supportive Leadership***

Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo (2021) described the final enabling condition, supportive leadership, as “the container—the space—for the other elements to flourish” (p 99). Looking at Strahan née Brown et al.’s (2019) work from England, teachers suggest support from leaders in stress management, implementation of supporting structures like peer observations and team meetings, and instructional coaching all have a positive impact on building CTE. In Turkey, Çalik et al. (2012) found the highest, positive correlation between collective efficacy and support to teacher development by leaders.

Fancera and Bliss (2011) outlined the ways leaders are able to provide mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, and social persuasion to support CTE in schools. Many of the examples given by Fancera and Bliss (2011) align with previous research: instructional coaching, team meetings, peer observations, communicating school goals, and providing professional development. Nordick et al. (2019) maintained that a leader should be a part of relationship building throughout the building even when the leader is already well-known. Goddard et al.'s (2015) analysis of CTE literature also demonstrated the importance of leaders working and learning alongside teachers. When collaborative learning between leaders and teachers occurs, leaders are more effective in sharing knowledge, giving feedback, and supporting in the areas most in need. Furthermore,

Goddard et al. (2015) found a positive relationship between instructional leadership and teacher collaboration through enactive experiences and concluded leaders should set high standards, seek teacher input, spend time with teachers in the classroom, and empower others. Strahan née Brown et al. (2019) summarized supportive leadership in this way:

Thus senior leaders who are able to communicate achievable expectations, are also visible and approachable, alert to potential stressors, acknowledging the risks of depersonalisation, and seeking to involve all staff in meaningful and appropriate decision making, are more likely to retain teachers who are motivated to work together and help children learn and develop. (p. 159)

Albert Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory provided a framework for collective efficacy to exist. Collective efficacy is found to be a significant predictor of positive outcomes in a school setting, and the school leader has the ability to promote CTE to exist by maintaining support for teachers, empowering others, creating a shared vision and providing structures to allow for cohesive teacher knowledge and reflective practices to occur (Hattie, 2021).

### **Collective Efficacy and Spiritual Leadership**

Collective efficacy and spiritual leadership connect and overlap as seen throughout the respective literature and research (see Table 1). First, goal consensus or shared visioning are important components of effective leadership, CTE and spiritual leadership (Çalik et al., 2012; Fry, 2003, 2005; Leithwood, 2008; Ross et al., 2004). Effective leadership styles with proven positive outcomes, repeatedly demonstrate that setting goals collaboratively is a valuable and necessary leadership strategy to use (Leithwood, 2008). As outlined earlier in the literature review, goal consensus is one of

the enabling components to be fostered by a leader to promote CTE (Arzonetti Hite & Donohoo, 2021), and visioning is a foundational element in which the SLT rests (Fry 2003, 2005). Fry (2005) stated when creating an effective shared vision, vision will give employees a feeling of making a difference in work. Sharing the visioning process empowers employees to feel a sense of responsibility for the desired outcomes and supports the intrinsic motivation to do so. Therefore, a spiritual leader, who empowers others by sharing the process of visioning, is also enabling CTE in the school.

Table 1. *Connections between Spiritual Leadership and Collective Efficacy Literature*

Topic of Connection	Spiritual Leadership Literature	Collective Efficacy Literature
Goal Consensus/Shared Visioning	Fairholm, 1997; Fry, 2003, 2005; Taghizadeh & Shokri, 2015	Arzonetti Hite & Donohoo, 2021; Çalik et al., 2012; Ross et al., 2004
Sense of Membership/Empowered Teachers	Fry, 2005; Houston & Sokolow, 2006;	Arzonetti Hite & Donohoo, 2021; Goddard & Skrla, 2006
Sense of Membership/Cohesive Teacher Knowledge	Chen & Yang, 2012; Wang et al., 2019	Arzonetti Hite & Donohoo, 2021; Nordick et al., 2019
Hope & Cohesive Teacher Knowledge	<b>Hope</b> (Fry, 2008) is intertwined in building cohesive teacher knowledge.	Building <b>cohesive teacher knowledge</b> is complex requiring " <b>hope</b> and optimism" (Arzonetti Hite & Donohoo, 2021, p. 57)
Collective Trust/Mutual Trust & Commitment	<b>Mutual trust</b> and commitment among staff is of high importance in SLT literature (Çimen & Karadağ, 2019)	<b>Collective trust</b> has reciprocal effect on CTE (Hoy, 2012)
Altruistic Love/Supportive Leadership	<b>Altruistic love:</b> "deep caring is a cornerstone of spiritual values" (Fairholm, 1997).	<b>Care and concern</b> of colleagues and leaders in stress management (Strahan née Brown et al., 2019)

A second component, which overlaps both spiritual leadership and CTE, is empowered teachers. Empowered teachers is one of the five enabling components of CTE according to Arzonetti Hite & Donohoo (2021). When examining the spiritual leadership literature, empowerment is important in creating a sense of membership

(Houston & Sokolow, 2006). Houston and Sokolow (2006), in discussing spiritual leadership, suggest spiritual leaders' empowerment of others through the use of unique gifts and talents allows members to use individual strengths while finding success, thereby permitting employees to have reciprocal experiences that support Bandura's social cognitive theory which collective efficacy derives. Fry (2005) found that "Empowered employees commit more of themselves to do the job through trust in the strategic leaders and the hope and faith that ensues from this trust" (p. 74). Likewise, Goddard and Skrla (2006) stated when there are high levels of CTE (i.e., sense of membership), there is also a strong sense of purpose.

Chen and Yang (2012) outlined in research from Taiwan the positive effects of spiritual leadership on organizational citizenship behaviors. Chen and Yang (2012) found spiritual leaders led employees to feel a sense of membership and commitment to one another which results in employees assisting each other in solving problems and moving the organization forward together. The commitment to one another and working together is also seen in Nordick et al.'s (2019) CTE research where "shared unity" is a theme. Shared unity is seen in how teachers interact in formal and informal ways to share and learn from one another to grow the community of learners. Wang et al.'s (2019) Chinese research found a significantly positive relationship between spiritual leadership and knowledge sharing behaviors amongst followers. As explained in Wang et al.'s (2019) research, knowledge sharing behaviors within an organization include sharing important information with one another and collaborating as a group to move towards a common goal. Similarly, Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo (2021) defined cohesive teacher knowledge "as the degree to which teachers are aware of the teaching practices of others and their

agreement in regard to what constitutes effective assessment and instructional practices” (p. 55). Organizational citizenship behaviors associated with spiritual leadership share qualities of cohesive teacher knowledge from CTE.

In addition to sharing similarities with organizational citizenship behaviors, cohesive teacher knowledge holds values similar to spiritual leadership. Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo (2021) explained cohesive teacher knowledge does not just happen with collaboration, but there is a non-linear process of learning, implementing, reflecting, changing, and so on. The process of building cohesive teacher knowledge becomes complex and “complex work requires hope and optimism because it is impossible to strive for a more positive future without vision and a belief in what is possible to achieve” (Arzonetti Hite & Donohoo, 2021, pp. 56-57). Hope, as defined in spiritual leadership, is the positive expectation something will come to be (Fry, 2008). In the context of what Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo (2021) were explaining, complex work can be difficult and discouraging when one feels like progress is not being made; where progress is not felt is where hope, or the positive expectation, that the work will pay off and move the group to the vision and goals. The combination of the ideas of Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo (2021) and Fry (2008) is where hope and cohesive teacher knowledge can be seen intertwined.

Hoy’s (2012) analysis of research to find which school elements have a positive impact on student outcomes shows collective trust has a reciprocal effect on CTE. “Trust requires a leap of faith in others and efficacy is embedded in a positive outlook as well” (Hoy, 2012, p. 84). In Asia Minor, Çimen and Karadağ (2019) found spiritual leadership to have a positive correlation with academic success and organizational culture whereby

“mutual trust and commitment between teachers, school administrators and other school staff” is of high importance (p. 20). Spiritual leadership also emphasizes the element of faith which is seen in the belief in something or someone with hope being the action. Therefore, trust is the action of the faith in others.

In Strahan née Brown et al.’s (2019) work, there is an intersection between CTE and altruism. In the description of the theme of stress management, Strahan née Brown et al. (2019) stated, “several teachers said the experience of stress itself could be isolating, having the support of the CE of colleagues and senior staff appears to have provided some inoculation against the most isolating and corrosive aspects of inspections” (p. 156). Described here, is the care, concern, and understanding others have for one another that not only comes from a place of spirituality (i.e., altruistic love), but also of an environment supported in CTE.

With Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo’s (2021) five enabling components of CTE and Fry’s (2003, 2005, 2008) five elements of the SLT overlapping in much of the research and current literature, the purpose of the current study was to explore how spiritual leadership promotes CTE in school buildings. At the time of the current study, there was a gap in existing research literature connecting spiritual leadership and CTE. The purpose of the current study was to explore how spiritual leadership among public school administrators, in the United States, promotes CTE; therefore, uncovering the commonalities and linkages between spiritual leadership and CTE as experienced or perceived by the participants, filling the existing gap in literature.

## Conclusion

The SLT has a foundation in a leader's inner life (or personal spirituality) whereby leaders create a vision, demonstrate altruistic love and hold faith/trust in others (Fry 2003, 2005, 2008). Fry's (2008) model demonstrated how vision, altruistic love and faith/hope of a leader create a sense of membership and calling for followers thereby leading to positive organizational outcomes. In the public school setting, in the United States, where achievement scores are used to rate schools (*Every School Succeeds Act*, 2015), positive academic outcomes are essential. Spiritual leadership has been positively correlated with academic success (Çimen & Karadağ, 2019) as has CTE (Hattie, 2021). Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory is expanded to support collective efficacy through the same efficacy supporting sources as defined in the self-efficacy theory: enactive mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and affective states. Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo (2021) outlined five related first-order enabling conditions of CTE a leader can foster: goal consensus, empowered teachers, cohesive teacher knowledge, embedded reflective practices, and supportive leadership. An effective school leader possesses elements found in both the SLT and CTE sources and conditions (Arzonetti Hite & Donohoo, 2021; Çalik et al., 2012; Fry, 2003, 2005; Hallinger, 2011; Hattie, 2021; Leithwood, 2008; Ross et al., 2004); however, there is no existing literature connecting the two. The goal of this study was to explore how spiritual leaders among public school administrators, in the United States, promote CTE; therefore, uncovering the commonalities and linkages between spiritual leadership and CTE as experienced or perceived by the participants, filling the existing gap in literature.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Chapter 3 outlines the research process employed in this qualitative study. The current study explored how spiritual leadership among public school administrators, in the United States, promotes collective teacher efficacy (CTE). Studies, as outlined in the previous chapter, have demonstrated the effectiveness of spiritual leadership as an approach in school settings (Bafadal et al., 2018; Chen & Yang, 2012; Kaya, 2015; Reave, 2005;). CTE, as seen in research, can be enabled by school administrators to produce positive outcomes for students (Arzonetti Hite & Donohoo, 2021). There is, however, a lack of current peer-reviewed literature demonstrating spiritual leadership as a leadership framework which promotes CTE. The purpose of this grounded theory study was to explore how spiritual leadership among public school administrators, in the United States, promotes CTE. The central research question for this study was: How do spiritual leaders, in a public school setting, promote CTE? The two guiding questions, with the developed interview protocol (Appendix A), that ensured the central research question was answered were:

1. How is decision-making impacted by a spiritual leader's self-acknowledged spirituality in a public school setting?
2. What actions do school administrators take to promote the components of CTE?

The remainder of Chapter 3 outlines the research approach, the role of the researcher, data collection and analysis procedures, validation and ethical considerations for the current study.

### **Characteristics of Qualitative Research**

A qualitative approach to research is common in an educational setting and allows researchers to be immersed in the setting of the research and come to a deep understanding of the participants' experiences with the phenomenon or concept studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Typically, qualitative research is conducted through interviews to gain firsthand knowledge of the experiences of the participants to derive meaning from the collected data. A qualitative approach to research is inductive with the researcher as the primary instrument, uncovering or deriving meaning from participants' experiences by providing rich descriptions to support interpretations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In addition, reflexivity is an important element of qualitative research that positions the researcher's experiences and biases within the study. The researcher acknowledges the experiences, biases, and values brought to the study and developed throughout the study through memoing (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Researcher experiences, biases and values are bracketed to reflect as pure of an interpretation of the participants' experiences as possible. The focus of qualitative research is studying participants within individual occurring environments and interpreting individual experiences to make meaning (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

The researcher used a qualitative approach, with a social constructivist perspective, to explore how public school leaders who identified as spiritual leaders promoted CTE to uncover the commonalities and linkages between spiritual leadership and CTE as experienced or perceived by the participants. Spirituality is an attribute that is embodied by a person's intangible self (Fairholm, 1997); therefore, spirituality cannot be quantified and a need for exploration within a qualitative framework was necessary.

Furthermore, allowing participants to share experiences of enabling CTE provided rich descriptions to interpret a conceptual framework for how spiritual leadership promotes CTE in practice.

### **Grounded Theory Approach**

Researchers employ a grounded theory approach for the purposes of explaining interactions within a phenomenon to inductively develop a theory or general explanation directly out of the data collected (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Creswell & Creswell Báez, 2021). According to Charmaz (2014), grounded theory “often demonstrates the causes and conditions under which the process emerges and varies, and delineates its consequences” (p. 10). The grounded theory approach, developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), is a cyclical process whereby data collection and analysis are ongoing in a process called “constant comparisons” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). In the integrated process of grounded theory research, the researcher conducts an interview, analyzes the data and repeats the process to make “comparisons during each stage of the analysis” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 7). According to Corbin and Strauss (2015), constant comparison “allows researchers to identify relevant concepts, validate them, and explore them more fully in terms of their properties and dimensions” (p. 69). Theoretical sampling is collecting and analyzing data in a manner whereby the researcher collects data based on results of previous data to construct a theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Creswell and Creswell Báez (2021) describe theory, within the grounded theory approach, as “an explanation that helps predict what will occur, how people will behave, or how events will unfold in many situations” (p. 274). As stated by Charmaz (2014), the iterative

process allows the researcher to inductively construct a theory from the data; therefore, the theory is ‘grounded’ in data.

The purpose of the current study was to explore how spiritual leadership among public school administrators, in the United States, promotes CTE. In doing so, the researcher explored how elements of spiritual leadership may predict the occurrence of CTE, thereby providing a framework for leaders to intentionally employ to promote CTE within the school setting. A grounded theory approach was most appropriate as data was collected and analyzed to create a conceptual framework for the use by public school leaders.

### **Role of the Researcher**

Spirituality is a part of who I am as a person; an essence that transcends my being. I am unable to strip myself of my spirituality when I enter the school doors as a public school administrator; therefore, my spirituality influences who I am and how I lead others. I believe my life’s purpose is beyond my selfish needs and desires, and is to serve others in a way that brings people together to produce a greater good; and in my professional world, the greater good is for students. Because I highly value my spirituality and the collective good of a group, I hold great interest in exploring other spiritual leaders’ professional experiences to understand how the spiritual leadership framework might promote CTE to bring about a greater good in the school setting.

Since I was born, God instilled within me a faith in Him. God calls me to engage in the work I do serving students, staff, and a community in a public school setting. As a public school leader in the United States of America, there is a constitutional obligation to separate “church and state” as outlined in the Establishment Clause (U.S. Const.,

Amend. I), and therein, I believe lies a juxtaposition of a spiritual public school leader. As seen in the literature previously presented, spirituality can exist with or without an existence of a religious affiliation (Fairholm, 1997; Fry, 2003); therefore, I believe the spiritual leadership framework should be considered and acknowledged in the public school setting as a viable leadership framework and style to be explored and employed.

Over the past 20 years serving in public education, I have experienced different working environments: middle school and high school settings, teaching and administrative positions. I worked in a school where the leaders and staff did not collaborate and student performance was stagnant. I attended team meetings, talking only about what each teacher was doing in the classroom that week, and there was very little discussion about how the team could better support students and/or each other to make a great impact on student well-being and achievement. Staff meetings, decided by building administrators, were scheduled for twice a year and other professional development opportunities were left up to each individual teacher.

On the other end of the perception of collective efficacy, I worked in multiple buildings where there was a sense of collective efficacy with aligned visions. In these school environments, student performance was consistently on the rise, and I felt a sense of purpose. In these buildings, teachers met in both formal and informal teams to reflect with one another on how to best work with students. Teams discussed individual students and how to meet the learning needs of those students as well as groups of students who were not progressing either academically or behaviorally. When I wanted to try a new teaching strategy, I could go to my colleagues and ask for feedback and input. I would circle back to reflect on how the strategy went once the strategy was implemented, and I

had the trust, support, and encouragement from my colleagues to be vulnerable. In essence, I experienced working in public school buildings where CTE was perceived to be absent as well as perceived as being very high. I have first-hand understanding of the difference CTE makes in teaching and learning. As a current public school leader who identifies as being spiritual, I am interested in understanding how other spiritual leaders promote the highly researched and effective component of schools: collective teacher efficacy.

My experiences with collective efficacy and my worldview as a spiritual human shape the way I construct reality. Personal biases I brought to my research included:

1. Spirituality is an important aspect of every human being.
2. Spirituality positively impacts a person's ability to interact and lead others.
3. I believe most school leaders would claim to be spiritual at some level.
4. Leaders who identify as spiritual are better able to connect and have empathy for the people served.
5. Leaders are influenced not only by spirituality, but also by people who surround leaders (i.e., mentors, colleagues, friends, family).
6. I believe spiritual leadership is positively connected to promoting CTE.
7. CTE can be promoted by the leaders in the school setting.
8. All leaders should focus on promoting CTE.

In grounded theory research, I acknowledged that my participants and I brought “biases, beliefs, and assumptions” to the research (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 98). Unlike other qualitative research, “instead of bracketing out shared experiences, the researcher is

encouraged to use these as comparative cases to stimulate thinking and in turn theorizing” (Birks & Mills, 2015, p. 61). From a constructivist viewpoint, the participants and researcher were “part of our constructed theory and this theory reflects the vantage points inherent in our varied experiences, whether or not we are aware of them” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 260). I remained aware of my biases and continued to reflect on how my biases influenced interpretations and analysis through the use of memoing and analyzing those memos, thereby promoting reflexivity and theoretical sensitivity in the research process and creating validity.

A social constructivist interpretive framework was used in this study. This philosophical perspective views reality varying by individual because reality is constructed by the experiences of each individual. Therefore, from this perspective, I attempted to understand each participant’s reality of the experience studied to find commonalities and themes among a particular group while honoring personal values (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), “the researcher’s intent is to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world. Rather than starting with a theory (as in postpositivism) inquirers generate or inductively develop a theory or pattern of meaning” (p. 8).

Researcher sensitivity “requires that a researcher take the role of the other—walk, so to speak, in that other person’s shoes—and try to discern the meaning of words and actions of the participants” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 78). My biases were outlined at the start of the research process, and I kept researcher sensitivity in order to accurately represent and interpret the participants’ experiences and insights. Furthermore, I verified interpretations against other interview data utilizing constant comparisons to create

consistency. As I conducted the research, I journaled alongside my reflective memos and continually clarified the research process, data, and analysis as a way to identify and acknowledge changing biases. The process of constant comparisons was utilized “throughout the research where data is matched against data not only for similarities and differences but also for consistency, with researchers being able to check into how they give meaning and conceptualize” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p.47).

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Participants for the current study were identified through ongoing purposeful, convenient sampling. In order for a participant to have participated, criteria must have been met. A participant held a titled administrative position in a public school building within the United States and self-identified as a spiritual leader. How each participant defined spiritual leadership was elaborated on through the first three questions of the interview protocol (see Appendix A). The researcher recruited 10 participants through email (see Appendix B), social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook (see Appendix C), and recommendations from colleagues and other participants. Though recruitment messages were placed on Twitter and Facebook so anyone in the United States who met the criteria could participate, only leaders from the state of Nebraska responded or were recommended by others.

Given the qualitative design of this study, individual, face-to-face or Zoom, semi-structured interviews were used to gather data from participants with the possibility of a second interview if further clarification was needed. The location of the interview was dependent on the convenience and location of the participant. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes with no follow-up interviews being needed because the data

collected in each of the first interviews saturated the emerging themes. All interviews took place from July 2022 through September 2022, except the pilot interviews which took place in January and February 2022. Each participant was asked a series of 8 general, open-ended questions (see Appendix A) with follow-up or probing questions for further clarification of participant responses based on the central research question: How do spiritual public school administrators promote CTE? Each interview was recorded using two audio recording devices and then transcribed by the researcher. The transcriptions were uploaded into Dedoose (version 9), a web-based coding software, coded and analyzed.

Throughout the research process, memoing and diagraming took place. According to Charmaz (2014), “memo-writing provides a space to become actively engaged in your materials, to develop your ideas, to fine-tune your subsequent data-gathering, and to engage in critical reflexivity” (pp. 162-163). Memo-writing began after the first interview and continued throughout the research process both immediately following an interview and immediately following the coding of each interview.

A pilot interview was conducted on January 28, 2022 using an interview protocol (see Appendix A). While coding the pilot interview the researcher questioned whether the interview questions were too leading; therefore, not allowing themes to emerge from the data or if the researcher was too close professionally to the pilot interview participant; therefore, not presenting the need for additional probing that might have provided rich description and more comprehensive data in regards to answering the research question. A second pilot interview was conducted on February 14, 2022, with a participant who the researcher did not know well in the professional setting. Through comparison of the two

pilot interviews' data, the researcher determined the questions in the original protocol were written to allow the participant to provide responses with rich description and data. These questions, alongside the three additional questions regarding how the participant views spirituality made up the interview protocol. The interview protocol, found in Appendix A, was used.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Qualitative data provides a rich view of the lived experiences of a particular phenomenon in the naturally occurring setting “with strong potential for revealing complexity” (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020, p. 8). In qualitative research, a first step in data analysis is reducing the data to codes in order to organize the data into themes. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2019), this is a fundamental skill in qualitative research. In grounded theory research, Charmaz (2014) states, “Coding is the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data” (p. 113). For the current grounded theory study, the researcher used three stages of analysis. First, line-by-line coding took place using gerunds which allowed the researcher to break the data apart and detect patterns while sparking new ideas to pursue towards the research question. According to Charmaz (2014), using gerunds for coding places emphasis on the process and gives action to the conceptual understanding.

The second stage of coding was focus coding where the researcher analyzed the initial codes by looking at what the codes were communicating, comparing codes between one another, and “distinguishing those codes that have greater analytic power” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 140). The researcher analyzed these codes and began to create categories whereby codes were grouped based on patterns and relationships. Categories

became multi-dimensional and led to the components of the grounded theory (Birks & Mills, 2015).

The first two stages of coding concurrently occurred as the researcher constantly compared the data between the interviews to build the categories in breadth and depth. As categories became clearer, the researcher began to theoretically sample to mine for data to better define and fill the categories, which were lacking in data. Once the categories were saturated, the final stage of analysis began. Theoretical coding or integration is a process where the researcher intertwines the categories to provide “an abstract explanation of the findings of your research” (Birk & Mills, 2015, p. 119). Theoretical integration took the categories and explained the relationship between the categories and how the categories worked together to create a theory.

Throughout the data analysis process, the researcher continued to evolve a theoretical diagram to display the growth of the theory and to break down the relationships into picture form. Diagraming occurred periodically throughout the research process. Diagrams are used for “organizing data and illustrating conceptual relationships” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 123). Diagraming allowed the researcher to reduce and analyze the data at varying degrees in order to provide “concrete images of our ideas” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 218).

### **Strategies for Validating the Findings**

Charmaz (2014) outlined four categories to evaluate a grounded theory study: credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). As outlined in Corbin and Strauss (2015), credibility is synonymous with believability. Believability is attained through “sufficient detail and description” (p. 345) not only in the thick

description of the data, but also in the description of data analysis, and believability can be attained through the number of interviews conducted in order to demonstrate data saturation. In the current study, credibility was attained through conducting 10 interviews, and all interviews were included in the data analysis process. Credibility was also attained through data saturation and the constant comparative analysis procedure used in the current study's coding processes (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Charmaz (2014) outlines originality as a theory bringing fresh ideas and insights to the phenomenon studied. Resonance can be attained by gaining the participants' insights to whether the theory makes sense and offers "them deeper insights about their lives and worlds" (p. 338). In other words, member checking (Appendix D) is utilized. The member-checking strategy was implemented as the current study progressed to ensure the categories and diagrams that made up the theory resonated with the participants.

Charmaz's (2014) fourth category for evaluating grounded theory research is usefulness also known by Corbin and Strauss (2015) as applicability. Applicability can be evaluated based on whether the theory fits the context the data came from as well as where the theory will be applied within diverse situations. The theory should also be explained in comprehensible terms and have the ability to bring change to an organization or situation (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The descriptive nature of the data analysis in the current study provided thick descriptions so transferability could be determined.

### **Ethical Considerations**

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2019), “As researchers, we are morally bound to conduct our research in a manner that minimizes potential harm to those involved in the study. We should be as concerned with producing an ethical research design as we are an intellectually coherent and compelling one” (p. 200). In this study, several steps were taken to ensure ethical decisions and steps were made. In doing so, participants were protected throughout all components of the research.

Considerations were made before, during and after the research was conducted to ensure the American Psychological Association ethical guidelines were followed. Throughout the study, the researcher used the data for only the intended purposes of the study. The researcher procured Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval through Doane University which addressed the potential risk to participants. Participants were given an informed consent form (see Appendix E) to sign prior to each interview, which outlined the following:

1. Purpose of the study
2. Interview format and time commitment
3. Known risks and/or benefits
4. A copy of the research results will be sent to the participant
5. Maintained confidentiality
6. Maintained anonymity unless otherwise requested
7. Possible publication of study results
8. Institutional Review Board information
9. Voluntary participation

## 10. Withdrawal from the study if desired

### **Summary**

This chapter outlined the methodology used in the current study. Through a social constructivist interpretive framework, a qualitative, grounded theory approach was used to gather and analyze data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Straus, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016;). Participants were sought based on specific criteria and were interviewed through semi-structured interviews. The researcher analyzed data into codes and categories concurrently with interviewing in order to constantly compare data as well as to theoretically sample to saturate categories in creating a conceptual framework. The researcher wrote memos to process initial thoughts after each interview and analysis. Diagramming by the researcher also took place throughout the data collection and analysis process to provide an evolving framework for a grounded theory to emerge. Ethical considerations were outlined and were regarded throughout the research process.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of the current study was to explore how spiritual leadership among public school administrators, in the United States, promotes collective teacher efficacy (CTE). The central research question for this study was: How do spiritual leaders, in a public school setting, promote CTE? The researcher analyzed data into codes and categories concurrently with conducting 10 semi-structured interviews in order to constantly compare data as well as to theoretically sample to saturate categories in creating a conceptual framework. Through data analysis, memoing and diagramming, a framework for a grounded theory emerged. Chapter 4 outlines the findings of the current qualitative, grounded theory research study including the context of the study, description of participants, themes and categories found across participants for leading spiritually, and a description and diagram of the grounded theory.

### **Context of the Study**

The current study took place during July-September of 2022 with school building administrators who all lived through the COVID-19 pandemic, Black Lives Matter movement, and the 2020 presidential election as a titled building leader in the state of Nebraska. The COVID-19 pandemic, Black Lives Matter movement, and the 2020 presidential election created a social and political context in the United States that placed new implications on the role of leading in a public school system. How the COVID-19 pandemic, Black Lives Matter movement, and the 2020 presidential election influenced the social and political context is outlined in the following sections of Chapter 4.

## **The COVID-19 Pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic began in late 2019 in China's Hubei Province with a cluster of cases of what were associated with atypical pneumonia-like sickness (Sencer, 2022). By early January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) caused the outbreak and was identified as the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which was renamed by WHO later in 2020 as COVID-19. On January 20, 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported the first verified cases of COVID-19 in the United States. By January 31, 2020, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a public health emergency. The COVID-19 virus spread throughout the United States, and many parts of the world, and was the cause of over 1,000 deaths worldwide by mid-February (Sencer, 2022). Air and cruise boat travel restrictions and quarantine periods were put in place by the CDC for people who planned to travel and/or who were exposed to the virus (Sencer, 2022). On March 11, 2020, the WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic and shortly after, Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts ordered public, private, and parochial schools to be closed for in-person learning (Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, 2020; Sencer, 2022). Learning began to occur in a virtual or home-based setting depending on Internet connectivity and device access. The way in which education was accessed was inconsistent across the state and within each community based on lack of immediate resources (Green, 2021).

By May 2020, the unemployment rate in the United States reached the highest level since the Great Depression (1929-1939) due the closure of many businesses as people did not go out in public unless necessary (Sencer, 2022). In late July 2020, the

CDC provided resources for school districts to begin planning for the 2020-2021 school year and putting in place strategies to slow the spread of COVID-19. As Nebraska schools began to plan for the 2020-2021 school year, the decision was left up to each school district in the state of Nebraska to decide how to best meet the needs of each community while following CDC and HHS guidelines (Launch Nebraska, 2020).

COVID-19 school accommodations included masking, keeping all students six feet apart, disinfecting desks and chairs between each class hour, providing individual lunches, and contact tracing when a student tested positive (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2020).

In December 2020, vaccines for COVID-19 were given emergency use authorization in the United States in order to begin widespread vaccination efforts for individuals 16 years of age and older (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research [MFMER], 2020). In an effort to equitably provide vaccines to United States citizens, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommended a phased approach with educators being identified as “essential personnel” and receiving vaccines in the second phase of the vaccine rollout, following healthcare workers and first responders (Sencer, 2022). By April 6, 2021, the CDC estimated that 80% of all preK-12 teachers and school staff received at least the first dose of the vaccine (Sencer, 2022). In May 2021, the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized the emergency use of vaccines for adolescents from ages 12 to 15 (Sencer, 2022).

In the state of Nebraska, opening schools for the 2021-2022 school year continued with guidelines from the local health department as well as the CDC due to students younger than 12 years of age not being approved for a vaccine. By November 2021,

ACIP recommended pediatric vaccines for children ages 5-11 (Sencer, 2022). While the approval of a pediatric vaccine allowed for school populations to be fully vaccinated, public opinion regarding vaccinations were divided (Kaiser Family Foundation [KFF], 2022) and school leadership found resistance as health department and CDC guidelines changed to meet the new reality: masks were no longer required, social distancing was reduced, and screening requirements changed (Sencer, 2022).

The current research study took place leading into the 2022-2023 school year. School leadership faced new challenges as the COVID-19 virus entered an endemic state while adults reporting symptoms of anxiety and/or depression rose from 28.6% in April 2020 to 31.3% in June 2022 in the state of Nebraska (KFF, 2020-2022). At the same time, the CDC reported, “more than a third (37%) of high school students reported they experienced poor mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic, and 44% reported they persistently felt sad or hopeless during the past year” across the United States (CDC, 2022).

In June 2022, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) conducted a survey and published the findings in the fall of 2022. The NASSP survey findings highlighted many of the challenges school leaders faced throughout the pandemic and as the school year began (National Association of Secondary School Principals [NASSP], 2020). NASSP (2022) reported, “3 out of 4 of school leaders (73%) and students (74%) report they needed help with their mental or emotional health last year.” In addition, the findings stated 50% of school leaders surveyed were considering a career change or retirement within the next five years due to the level of stress from the

job (NASSP, 2022). The context of the current study was situated in the midst of the reported findings of increased mental wellness concerns, stress, and future shortages.

### **The Black Lives Matter Movement**

In 2013, founded by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, the Black Lives Matter movement took shape (Black Lives Matter, 2021). The movement began after the July 2013 acquittal of George Zimmerman in the 2012 shooting death of Trayvon Martin and grew nationally after other white on black deaths occurred across the nation. On May 30, 2020, in Omaha, Nebraska, a protester who was black was shot and killed by a bar owner, who was white, during an evening protest of a death of a person of color by a person who was white which occurred in the Midwest earlier in May. The deaths of individuals of color by individuals who are white increased the number of protests around the United States and flooded the news headlines (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project [ACLED], 2021).

In opposition to the Black Lives Matter Movement, some people “with concern that the phrase neglects the value of non-Black lives, choosing instead to align themselves with the phrase ‘All Lives Matter’” (Black Lives Matter, 2021). In 2020, the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation was called “to eradicate the white supremacy that is behind the violence inflicted on Black communities by the State and vigilantes” through a call to defund the police (Black Lives Matter, 2020, p. 10). According to the Black Lives Matter 2020 Impact Report, many people misunderstood what defunding the police would look like and began to disseminate information “with alternative options for [what] community safety could look like” (p. 11). As stated in the 2020 Impact Report, “Our movement is considered a threat by many. It is consistently

misrepresented, centered in false narratives, and presented through a lens of violence” (p. 39). With the increased presence of the Black Lives Matter movement came social and political implications for school leaders to consider.

### **2020 Presidential Election**

The division of public opinions in the United States continued to be seen through the 2020 presidential election. The United States presidential campaigns took place during the COVID-19 pandemic and major events of the Black Lives Matter movement. According to Baccini et al. (2021), approval polls for then President Donald Trump had “showed nearly 60% of Americans disapproved of Trump’s response to the pandemic” (p. 743). The timing of the campaigns led to disagreements about how the pandemic should be handled, how vaccines would be mandated or not, and how funding, legislation and support for minority groups would or would not change (Baccini et al., 2021; Mutz, 2022). Voters supporting then former Vice President Joe Biden in the election wanted the government to work towards limiting further spread of the COVID-19 virus even if it meant damaging the economy while supporters of then President Donald Trump wanted the economy to be the focus (Peoples, 2020).

Furthermore, during the election campaign debates, then President Donald Trump would not give a definitive response to denouncing nor supporting right extremist groups like “Proud Boys.” According to “Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, Patriot Prayer, and Various Militia Groups Become More Active during the 2020 Presidential Campaign Season and Its Aftermath” (2022):

These militia groups were predominantly pro-Trump and felt that they had the endorsement and support of the president. [Trump’s] warnings of election fraud,

heightened crime, and invasion by undocumented immigrants fed into their underlying racist beliefs, fear of globalism undermining Western values, and the demonization of liberals... They consistently believed the misinformed notion that the only way Trump could lose the election was if it was ‘rigged.’ (para. 6)

On November 3, 2020, former Vice President Joe Biden won the 2020 presidential election. On January 6, 2021, during the certification of the Electoral College votes, protestors outside the Capitol building breached the building and were arrested for what has been cited as a possible “insurrection” (Faulders et al., 2022).

The divides that grew through the previous years, leading up to the 2022-2023 school year (Gramlich, 2020), became a microcosm in the school buildings (Valant, 2022). COVID-19 parameters, equity issues, and politically charged topics were all present in the lives and work school leaders did on a daily basis. The researcher of the current study interviewed titled building leaders who held leadership positions in the state of Nebraska leading through the outlined events above.

### **Description of Participants**

For the current study, there were a total of ten participants who were interviewed in a semi-structured format to reach saturation and theoretical sampling. All participants were given pseudonyms, held a head principal position in a Nebraska public school, and self-identified as a spiritual leader. Participants’ experiences ranged in position levels and buildings serving students from preschool through twelfth grade. The size of the districts each led in, also ranged from rural communities with populations less than 5,000 to urban (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022).

Melissa and Grace both led in an urban district as the principal of elementary schools educating students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Craig and J. Scott each served as an elementary principal in rural school districts serving students in preschool through sixth grade and preschool through fifth grade respectively. Sam, also an elementary school principal, served in an urban school district with students in kindergarten through sixth grade. Ellie and Tina were middle school principals from urban districts serving students in sixth, seventh and eighth grade. Jay, David and Melvin all led in rural districts at the high school level. Jay and Melvin were the principals of seventh through twelfth grade buildings while David led in a ninth through twelfth grade high school (see Table 2).

Table 2. *Participant professional demographic information*

Pseudonym	District Size	School Level	Grade levels in School
Melissa	Urban	Elementary	Kindergarten - 5th grades
Grace	Urban	Elementary	Kindergarten - 5th grades
Craig	Rural	Elementary	Preschool - 6th grades
J. Scott	Rural	Elementary	Preschool - 5th grades
Sam	Urban	Elementary	Kindergarten - 6th grades
Ellie	Urban	Middle	6th - 8th grades
Tina	Urban	Middle	6th - 8th grades
Jay	Rural	High	7th - 12th grades
David	Rural	High	9th - 12th grades
Melvin	Rural	High	7th - 12th grades

All participants were recruited through either social media posts or recommendations from other leaders. David, Ellie, Grace, Jay, Melissa and Tina were all recommended by other educational leaders throughout the state of Nebraska while Sam, J. Scott, Craig and Melvin responded to the recruiting social media posts (see Appendix

C). Six of the participants were interviewed over Zoom while four of the participants interviewed in person, face to face. Each participant chose which modality was preferred. Regardless of modality chosen, the same interview protocol was followed for each interview. After analysis of all interviews, each participant received a member checking form (see Appendix D) and was given the opportunity to note any discrepancies or questions in the analysis.

### **Findings Across Participants**

While concurrently conducting interviews and coding and analyzing the data from interviews, themes emerged. The themes provided context to how the participants in the current study emulated spirituality through leadership, and a grounded theory emerged demonstrating how spiritual leaders promote CTE. During the analysis process, data was coded for “leading spiritually” when the responses came directly from a question asking about spirituality as well as when a participant’s response spoke directly to how spirituality influenced aspects of how one leads. The data was also coded for the essence of what the participants communicated. The codes co-occurring with the “leading spiritually” code were analyzed for themes. The themes which emerged from the data for leading spiritually were: mindset, human connection, higher calling, and actions.

All participant data was also coded and analyzed for the enabling components of CTE and for the essence of what the participant communicated. The analyzed data demonstrated components to a grounded theory. The grounded theory to emerge, has five components that emerged: development over time, purpose/focus, disposition, human connection, and actions. As self-acknowledged spiritual leaders, all participants demonstrated alignment with each of the themes for leading spiritually in the current

study; however, in the analysis of data across all participants for emerging themes around CTE and as the grounded theory emerged for how spiritual leaders promote CTE, Melvin gave limited responses supporting CTE.

### **Leading Spiritually**

During the interview process, three questions were asked specifically about the participants' spirituality and how spirituality influences leadership and how being a spiritual leader is different from being just a "great/good leader" (see Appendix A). While coding, the researcher coded for "leading spiritually" throughout participant responses as well as for the essence of what the participants communicated. All codes that co-occurred with "leading spiritually" across all participant data, were analyzed and four themes emerged demonstrating what a spiritual leader embodies (see Appendix F). These four themes are: mindset, human connection, higher calling, and actions. The top six co-occurring codes with "leading spiritually" can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. *Top six co-occurring codes with "leading spiritually"*

Code	Number of co-occurrences	Theme
having a "higher calling"	17	Higher Calling
"speaking through action"	16	Human Connection
building consensus	12	Human Connection
knowing and promoting what you value	11	Mindset
building teacher cohesive knowledge	10	Human Connection
serving while leading	10	Human Connection

### ***Mindset***

“I always go back to...I had a college professor in law school. He was the dean of the law school and he always said, ‘where you stand depends on where you sit.’” This excerpt from Melvin’s interview demonstrated how Melvin knew the values and beliefs lived by and how values and beliefs affect how one sees and interacts in the world. The first theme to emerge from the participants’ data is mindset.

Mindset emerged out of the thematic codes of knowing and promoting what one values, having a genuineness, finding joy, being thankful, being “natural,” and “creating openness” (see Appendix F, Table F1). The theme of mindset aligns with Fry’s (2008) description of a spiritual leader’s inner life or spiritual practice in which there is “a fundamental source of inspiration and insight” (p. 111) a spiritual leader holds, influencing the service and care given to the leader’s followers. Fry’s (2008) inner life is seen in Sam’s description as a spiritual leader when Sam stated, “but in my world, the spiritual lens that I’m coming from is really just again, dying to self and serving in the way that Jesus served.” In this statement, Sam specifically stated the fundamental source of inspiration and insight as Jesus, the Savior in the Christian faith. Jesus provides Sam with a vision of how a spiritual leader should serve others in the same way Jesus served during His lifetime.

Ellie’s statement, “I just think that there’s kind of a belief system that comes into play as a spiritual leader that you might not see as just as a good leader” also described a mindset of belief differentiating a spiritual leader from just a great leader.

Craig stated the source of inspiration and insight influencing the transcendent power of self when stating:

People are always going to question you, and you're always going to have people that believe in you and people that don't. And especially in leadership...the naysayers or the complainers or the people that don't respect the vision. At the end of the day, if you are a spiritual leader, you are comfortable in your own skin because I represent, I represent (with emphasis) a greater being.

Craig's investment in faith in a greater being not only gives Craig confidence as a leader, but also supports the hope/faith held in the vision put forth (Fry, 2008).

When responding to what being a spiritual leader means, Grace supports Fry's (2008) description of a spiritual leader within the values of altruistic love by stating, "I think a spiritual leader is going to be about life and not just about work; about how people...treat each other." Grace later restated thoughts on the value of altruistic love as a spiritual leader when differentiating a spiritual leader from just a great leader by stating, "Just a different level of openness and care with everybody, I think."

Melissa echoed the deep care and compassion a spiritual leader holds for others when stating:

You know, I think you can be an awesome school leader and...run the building, great systems going and...all of that, and hold your teachers accountable, but that extra, there's an extra piece to using your spirituality to guide your decisions and ...I don't know, just your day to day operations with people in the kind and caring, compassionate person that I feel like I am.

Tina specifically talked about the mindset of a spiritual leader coming from a non-religion-based source of inspiration and insight. As Tina responded to what being a

spiritual leader means, the concept of feeling and reflecting on the energy existing in the space was the spiritual component to Tina's leading and the base used to serve others:

[Pause] Well, I think it has to do with mindset maybe, and being open to what is like...so I just transitioned to a new principalship as you know, and so my approach coming in was, what is here, what exists, what is living here? And my job, my responsibility is to understand and analyze and accept that energy and that culture and that life that's here, right? What's the life of this building?

Acknowledging the energy present in a leader's space and holding a mindset of presuming positivity aligns with Chen & Yang's (2012) and Kaya's (2012) research, in Taiwan and Turkey respectively, demonstrating the positive and significant relationship between spiritual leadership and organizational citizenship behaviors; specifically, those of sportsmanship and civic virtue. Sportsmanship mindset can be seen in David's statement of, "So you know, I guess...I think, you know, it goes back to that...kind of inner peace to be able to find the good in tough situations."

Craig stated something similar and included the concept of civic virtue when stating spiritual leaders are:

Not always out there preaching every Sunday or preaching to their teachers, but teachers know that they are a human of character, of integrity and the choices that they make. I respect that because of the type of person they are.

In addition, the theme mindset encompasses the thematic codes of knowing and promoting what one values and having a genuineness about one's leadership (see Appendix F, Table F1). J. Scott stated, "So, to me, that's what it's about. It's just those values that you hold, promoting them and allowing others to explore those and give them

permission to follow them too.” This statement represented the thematic codes, from the current study, of knowing what a leader values and promoting those values with followers.

The idea of a spiritual leader promoting values through modeling is further explored by Jay:

And I think more and more like, I can't stand there and preach to people. But kind of my belief is it's my job to behave in a way that represents what I believe. And so I think that we have huge opportunities to infuse that into our every day without saying, you know, go God...or you need to do this or that.

Finding joy, being thankful and holding a mindset “natural” of a spiritual leader are thematic codes from the current research seen under the mindset theme and are demonstrated in David and J. Scott's statements. In the following excerpt, David described joy and how joy is valued as a leader:

I can't just have joy on my own. Because that's...not very joyful. Like if it's just me being happy, that's not really joyful. True joy, takes a group of people that have a like mind and are enjoying the same things.

Valuing thankfulness in a natural manner was stated by J. Scott: “And I thank them for being here. I say it when they're walking in the hallways, they're having a tough day. I think it's just being authentic.”

A spiritual leader holds a mindset encompassing knowing, promoting, and living out values and beliefs in a transcendental manner to serve others for a spiritually grounded purpose greater than oneself. The mindset theme aligns with Fry's (2008) description of a spiritual leader. Fry's (2008) theory also states a necessity of “collective

tolerance” (p. 114) for the different aspects of an inner/spiritual life so everyone is able to experience meaning and purpose through work without feeling ostracized. Collective tolerance of a spiritual leader also emerged as a theme in the current research as human connection.

### ***Human Connection***

“So I look at spiritual leadership, is a little bit different in the sense of being a part of a big collective group that is working towards the same goal.” Collective tolerance as Fry (2008) refers to, connected to Ellie’s statement in seeing the work being completed through a collective group towards a common goal. Furthermore, collectively working towards a goal parallels Fairholm’s (1997) statement that “visions come from the central core of the leader and reflect (or come to reflect) the central core of the group” (p. 28). Human connection emerged as the second theme from the data analysis process of the current study and encompassed thematic codes from the coding process like: building connections between and among others, encouraging and empowering others, trusting, speaking through action, and being a leader who walks alongside others while serving and getting to know each person on a human level (see Appendix F).

In response to what differentiates a spiritual leader from being just a great leader, Tina stated, “I think for the spiritual side, I get the work done. We do great work, but you will also get a piece of my heart, like it or not.” Tina described a former boss who got the work done but maybe did not give others a piece of one’s heart. The description of “giving a piece of my heart” Tina used represented the connection created between Tina, as the leader, and others intentionally fostered even if the receiver was not looking for that connection.

David stated the foundation of connecting with others this way: “I think there is...an inner peace and then an ability to find joy.”

Jay stated, “I think your spiritual leaders are more engaged from their heart.” In parallel to what is presented in Tina, David and Jay’s statements is Fairholm’s (1997) idea of leaders not only need to lead from the mind, but lead from the heart which comes from an inner life or spiritual practice.

Fairholm (1997) described altruistic love as a deep caring and as “the cornerstone of spiritual values” (p. 56). The demonstration of altruistic love is present in J. Scott’s statement, “I say I love you every morning on the announcements to our kids and our staff.” J. Scott continued the response to the question, “What are elements of your leadership that teachers would identify as being supportive?” by speaking about a similar conversation J. Scott had:

Like you really care...I asked my wife one time, I’m like, if someone asked you, “What would surprise them about me that you know, that obviously no one else knows?” and she’s like, how much you really, you really care and love people, even when it’s a tough conversation, or may seem like you don’t.

Fairholm (1997) expanded deep caring as reverence, a deep admiration or devotedness to others. Craig described a type of reverence carried for staff and expects others to reciprocate:

Because the way I’m believing in you and my staff, the way I empower and inspire you, I want you to take that into the classroom. I never have to say, “be, be like Christ, believe in God. Act this certain way.” Just be kind, believe in others, believe in your talents that you were given to educate our kids.

The deep level of care and love for people is what Fry (2008) and Fairholm (1997) referred to as altruistic love found in the spiritual leadership theory (SLT). Fry's (2003) definition of altruistic love is also defined with a number of values including "patience, kindness, lack of envy, forgiveness, humility, selflessness, self-control, trust, loyalty, and truthfulness" (p. 712). The value of trust is seen in the theme of human connection and is represented in Grace's following statement:

And for reasons I may or may not...share with the team of how I came to that group, but I feel like part of being a spiritual leader in that regard has been over time you build an intense amount of, intense and immense amount of trust with people.

Melvin described the value of having grace with people when making decisions as a spiritual leader. Melvin stated:

I'm trying to...know how far to go with things. I think...grace plays a big part in it. You know, being graceful with people and...understanding where they've come from, you know, when I leave my office, a lot of people are dealing with a lot of crap.

Melvin's statement also contains an element of knowing how to serve others as a leader. Fry (2005) explains the pursuit of spiritual well-being is about serving others. The thematic code identified in the current study, "speaking through action," co-occurred more often than any other code besides one with "leading spiritually" (see Table 3). "Speaking through action" is encompassed in the current study's theme of human connection because the code represents service to others through action.

David stated, “But my mission from 2004 was ‘to strive to live with a moral purpose, allowing my actions to speak louder than my words.’”

Echoing the mission of service to others, Sam stated, “Because I just feel like [Jesus] was the ultimate servant and caretaker of people and so...that is the...exemplar model that I would like to somehow...be working towards day in and day out.”

The in vivo code, “speaking through action” was also applied in Craig’s statement, “And so I do that through the way I walk around and interact with people, the way I conduct meetings and the way, honestly the way I don’t or do talk about people all the time.”

J. Scott compared how teachers serve students to how leaders serve teachers:

Great teachers are...there for the kids. They don’t think the kids are there for them. I think it’s the same thing for leaders. Like, I work, I never say you work for me. I work for you. How can I support you?

Human connection encompasses how a spiritual leader works in a collective through service to others and speaking through action rather than words. Participants described values of trust, care, humility and patience which align with Fry’s (2003, 2008) SLT. At the core of a spiritual leader is an inner self sustained through a transcendence of self through a higher calling. The third theme to emerge from participant data was higher calling.

### ***Higher calling***

The theme, higher calling, emerged from the data as all participants stated a belief in a God tied to a doctrine or the belief in something greater than oneself for why and how one leads. What was found in the current research is aligned to Sendjaya’s (2007)

description of transcendental spirituality; those “behaviors that manifest an inner conviction that something or someone beyond self and the material world exists and makes life complete and meaningful” (p. 113). In line with Sendjaya’s (2007) description of transcendental spirituality, Craig stated:

But...spirituality is who you strive to represent knowing that the...ultimate goal is to lead many more people to Christ through the way you act, potentially through...your words, but your actions, especially as a principal...maybe you can’t use your words all the time...ultimately people see that and want to follow that and join in the kingdom when...their time on Earth is up.

When responding to the question about differentiating a spiritual leader from just a great leader, Sam stated: “I mean this in the most humbling sense of like, it’s that higher calling of...I’m taking care of people and kids every single day. We’re taking care of each other.” Sam also stated how spirituality influences leadership, “I would say for me, it ties into Christianity and a belief of something greater than...on Earth. Because then for me, I tie that into how I relate to people and serve people in their work.”

Melvin’s statements aligned an inner conviction to a faith in God. Melvin stated, “I think being grounded in your faith, knowing that there’s a higher being or...somebody helping you along the way or having a support network.”

Jay also made the same connection as seen in a statement about spiritual leaders: “I think there’s a bigger calling to what [spiritual leaders are] present for.” Sam, Craig, Melvin and Jay described an inner conviction in relationship to a belief in God tied to Christianity.

In Grace's description of the positionality of an inner conviction, there was not a direct tie to a God or religion. Grace stated:

I feel that spirituality can be a benefit through the way that I see it in just believing in a greater purpose and having some different life experiences along the way personally that have really impacted me, then professionally because I always have had opportunities to see how we [pause], everything happens for a reason is a very broad statement.

Tina was explicit in differentiating spirituality based in faith versus based in something more universal. Tina stated:

I think the first thing that...pops into my mind is religion. And then I sort of have this inner conflict, where like, I'm not religious, but I really, really believe in spiritual things. And so, it's for me...a hybrid of this universal sort of belief or energy that we're all connected and all things are connected and we're connected to a higher power of some sort, what it looks like, I don't know.

Tina and Grace's statements demonstrated a distinction between spirituality and religion, as did Fairholm (1997). Religious overtones may be included in a person's spirituality; however, religious beliefs do not need to exist for spirituality to be present. In this same way, Fry (2003) concluded, "spirituality is necessary for religion but religion is not necessary for spirituality. Workplace spirituality and spiritual leadership can therefore be inclusive or exclusive of religious theory and practice" (p. 706).

Higher calling does not just include the positionality of a spiritual leader in how each view why one leads, but the theme also includes thematic codes like finding

meaning in the invested work and nourishing followers' spiritual well-being. Grace stated:

...but I feel like my purpose is kind of twofold. Professionally, in education, to help staff and students in the academic lens of things, but then I really feel kind of a profound sense of helping people see how valuable they are, to even why they're here, like their purpose, their contributions that maybe they're not aware of both in students and adults.

J. Scott stated the purpose to lead and lifting each other up:

[God] brought me here for a reason, what is that reason? And it's I think, perhaps the people here didn't hear [God's Word]. So...then that's something I want to work on and get back to. And to me that's lifting people up as part of that spirituality and...giving back and empowering people too.

At the core of a spiritual leader's purpose is a higher calling. The higher calling is a transcendence of self and a belief in the work a spiritual leader does is greater than oneself. Holding onto a higher calling with a need for human connection and a mindset on the greater purpose moves a spiritual leader to action. The actions a spiritual leader takes are found in the fourth theme emerged from participant data when codes were analyzed for leading spiritually.

### ***Actions***

The actions spiritual leaders took when leading in the current research revolved around balancing what is asked of followers, having intentionality, navigating challenges, building relationships, listening, and acknowledging others' strengths (see Appendix, F, Table F4). Many of the actions which emerged from participant data in the current

research aligned with Chen and Yang's (2012) and Kaya's (2015) findings of a positive and significant relationship between spiritual leaders and organizational citizenship behaviors: altruism, sportsmanship, conscientiousness, and civic virtue. Aligned with altruism are the thematic codes from the current study of building relationships and acknowledging others' strengths. Sportsmanship, the ability to deal with things not going as planned, is aligned with the current study's thematic code of navigating challenges while conscientiousness, or going beyond the expectations of the job, is aligned with the current study's thematic codes of having intentionality and decision-making.

Actions fitting of the altruism value emerged from the descriptions participants gave involving interactions with others. Grace stated, "I think a spiritual leader is going to be about life and not just about work; about how people treat each other."

Sam spoke of building relationships by getting to know each person and placing each person in a place to reach potential. Explaining the thought process in how Sam invests in others. Sam stated:

What do they value? What do they care about? What motivates them? And helping them think through why they do what they do. And if they know that, then it's leveraging that so it's putting people in places to help drive initiatives or narratives, letting them lead and giving them the platform to do so.

Melvin stated, "I think for me, it's understanding...of other people and their beliefs." A spiritual leader interacts with, invests in, and places others in positions where success will be found.

Grace's following excerpt shows how a spiritual leader invests in each follower:

Them as a mom, them as a friend, them as a person that takes care of themselves.

Them as a student who maybe has continually seen, heard, or felt like the heaviness of school or the overwhelmingness of maybe doesn't have the confidence behind that, to fill those gaps in those feelings to find the things that they are good at and that they can see value in themselves.

The context in which the current study was situated was at the point when COVID-19 became endemic and leaders just completed two years of navigating the constantly changing health requirements and diverse public opinions on how the government was handling the pandemic. Craig reflected on how decision-making changed during the pandemic where decisions were made more in isolation and the desire to change decision-making moving forward in a more collaborative manner:

So honestly, made a lot of decisions early on, and honestly through COVID you kind of had to. And then year two, year three coming out of that. Discovering that when I made decisions, it wasn't always taking the voices of others into consideration. I was making...what I felt was best and what I felt was best wasn't always either respected or viewed as the best decision. So, learning how to create a collaboration, a team of collaboration going into year four is what I'm all about.

When asked what piece of spirituality Craig will lean on to be able to lead in this way, Craig responded, "Continue to believe in the strengths of others."

Ellie spoke about the difficulties leading through the COVID-19 pandemic and navigating mental health challenges:

But within being a spiritual leader, I think also...really big right now as far as mental health goes. So, I've leaned in on my own, just, beliefs and those...core values a lot as we've dealt with some of the mental health stuff through pandemic.

J. Scott spoke of leaning on faith as well:

Allowing myself again to be vulnerable too, which is very difficult but that's where I think the spirituality comes out too, right? Like I'm sure you probably at times with all the COVID challenges and polarization on things thought, 'what the hell am I doing? You know, why am I doing this?' And then you just go back to...[God] put me here for a reason.

Ellie and J. Scott navigated the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic by leaning on faith and core beliefs while David described the intentionality used through the pandemic:

And that was...my reminder all year long, because that's...for me personally coming out of COVID. And like, you know, nothing that we did was pleasant. Right? Because everything was a battle. And you know, even every ball game that used to be fun...was a battle because...you know, cover your nose, keep your mask up and how many people need to come, and where do they get to sit? Are they six feet apart? It was just like it was such a [pause] and to be able to...be really intentional about finding those joyful experiences. And having fun and laughing and smiling and inter..., you know, interacting with people in a positive way.

As David described the actions taken to navigate through the difficulties of the COVID-19 pandemic, David spoke of being intentional about finding joy and interacting positively with others. The intentionality and going beyond what a leader might otherwise think and do, aligns with the organizational citizenship behavior of conscientiousness.

Melissa stated, “I think it’s the fact that a spiritual leader is somebody who’s a servant leader, who will do whatever it takes for their staff.”

Tina spoke of the intentionality of communicating the value of time:

And your time is the most valuable thing you have. So, I will always respect it and make the most of it. And so, I want [teachers] to expect from me if I have them for an hour and fifteen minutes, it’s going to be an hour and fifteen minutes of really rigorous work, but it’s going to be work. I won’t...have a staff meeting just to have a staff meeting. I won’t.

Craig tied building relationships and acknowledging others’ strengths to intentionality and going above and beyond in action as a leader: “And you were hired for a reason. You continue to show up and I’m going to support you. So, through positive comments, texts, calls, emails, shout outs.”

As the researcher coded participant interviews, excerpts were coded for “leading spiritually” when the participant was responding to a question regarding how spirituality plays into leadership. In addition, each excerpt coded for “leading spiritually” was also coded for the essence of the excerpt. After analyzing these code co-occurrences in the data, a spiritual leader in the current study demonstrated the themes of mindset, human connection, higher calling, and actions. Through the description of the emerging themes, connections to previous research and Fry’s (2003, 2005, 2008) SLT were presented.

### **Grounded Theory**

Through the lens of spiritual leadership, participants were asked how leaders promote Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo’s (2021) five related first-order collective efficacy-building factors (empowered teachers, embedded reflective practices, cohesive teacher

knowledge, goal consensus, and supportive leadership) in the school setting. The participant responses were coded for each of the five factors in addition to the essence of what the participant stated. The researcher took the code co-occurrences for each of the five factors and sorted the codes into themes. After completing the sorting process for each of the five enabling factors, the researcher analyzed all codes and sorted the codes into overall themes. The described analysis process occurred after each interview, concurrently, until themes became saturated and a grounded theory emerged (see Figure 2).

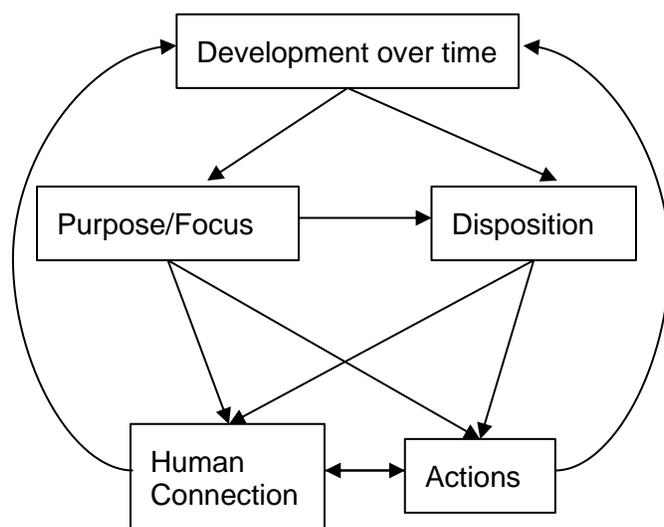


Figure 2. *Spiritual Leaders Promoting Collective Teacher Efficacy (CTE)*

The grounded theory to emerge from the current data demonstrates how a spiritual leader in a public school setting, in the United States, promotes CTE. The theory starts with the element of time. The theme, development over time, encompasses not only the development of CTE over time but also the development of the spiritual leader over the course of time with experiences and support. The spiritual leader's development over time leads to a disposition and purpose/focus. Disposition emerged as a component of the grounded theory explaining how a spiritual leader carries oneself and encompasses the

giving of oneself as a leader while leading towards CTE. The component of purpose/focus emerged as the concepts and ideas the spiritual leader holds as the foundation or belief in why one leads. Disposition and purpose/focus lead to human connection and action. Human connection is the component of the grounded theory which demonstrates how a spiritual leader treats others and how the leader wants others to feel. The final component of the grounded theory is actions. Actions describe the “what” a spiritual leader does and can be seen as CTE is promoted.

### *Development Over Time*

Participants described how the development into becoming a leader occurred over the course of time. The top five codes categorized with the component of development over time were: “developing over time,” being mentored, defining career, growing professionally, and reflecting (see Appendix G). Grace described the theme when stating:

But at the end of it, our life’s path takes us along a journey. Of course, there’s things that you wouldn’t want to have to experience and there’s things that are amazing and incredible that happen and it all comes back to that thought that if you change one thing, you change everything.

Grace’s statement explained the ripple effect each decision has.

Sam also talked about the ripple effect leaders have: “So it’s like the...ripple effect of every pebble in the pond, every comment, every conversation that I can have with someone could be that they can have that same conversation with somebody else and the impact becomes greater.”

Melissa spoke about becoming more confident as a spiritual leader and the actions a spiritual leader takes over the course of time. In referencing a conversation Melissa had

with a staff member after quietly praying over the staff member, Melissa stated, “I’m not afraid to do that anymore. Because I think it’s so important and it’s important that they know that you love them and care for them and you care for their spirituality.” Melissa continued by sharing how the same staff member prayed for another staff member: “And she was sitting there praying over her. It was cool. It was really cool.” The staff member being prayed over had just found out about a family member’s death.

David spoke of the impact tragedy and hard times have on a leader, and causes a leader to pause and reflect:

Well, you know, I think...that’s one of the probably the sad truths about...tragedies and deaths specifically, is, that’s usually the thing that it takes sometimes to smack us upside the head and say, hey dummy, you know what, you’re missing out. You’re missing some things here. You know, refocus.

Ellie spoke of reflection as a main component of the development as a spiritual leader: “Some of it’s just simply like what did or didn’t go well with the situation, right? But...some of it is, whenever you’re dealing with something that’s difficult, of reflecting on it.” Ellie continued by connecting faith to the practice of reflection and how professional growth occurs through reflection:

So, I think because my spirituality is kind of grounded in faith. There is a belief of...just taking the time when especially when you’re going through something difficult to do that. So, I’m a big reflective person, probably comes from going through [a Midwest university’s] educational leadership program.

Jay spoke about taking the time to pray and reflect over decisions needing to be made stating, “You know, I’ll tell you there’s not a decision that I make that isn’t

involved with me...spending a little time...praying on it or...reflective thinking, those kinds of things.” The development of self as a leader over time and seeing the effects the actions a leader has throughout the school setting is one part of the “development over time” component of the grounded theory.

The second piece that emerged from the “development over time” component was the aspect of CTE in a school setting taking time to develop. Sam made the following statement while responding to how embedded reflective practices are promoted in the school setting: “I think building reflective practice takes time.”

Tina described how the foundation of relationships supports the building of CTE components. Tina stated:

And so now as we move into things that are harder and uglier, we know that we’ve at least got each other at the human level. And I think part of that consensus building is over time as well because people have to learn to trust you and know your core values and how your decision processes fall within all of those things.

In Tina’s statement, consensus building is described as taking time. When analyzing co-occurring codes from interviews between the CTE enabling component of building consensus and the codes categorized under “development over time,” eleven of the twenty-two “development over time” codes are also found co-occurring with building consensus. These co-occurrences demonstrated how spiritual leaders across all interviews see building consensus as a process taking time.

Taking time and building trust in order to build consensus was echoed by David: “Because I think, you know, the process of building consensus has to start with a level of trust.”

Sam stated:

But that’s how each of us and all of us get better but it takes time to kind of see how teams operate together and then know where they’re at as a group in that cohesiveness and that collective teacher knowledge.

Melissa described building consensus through teachers modeling and using vicarious experiences to build consensus:

And then we...broke it apart into smaller chunks and just did a little bit at a time.

And then if some...of the people were like, I don’t want to do this, but then they started to see how easy it was and how nice it was and how it made their life easier.

Melissa continued by stating, “It just, it took time. But they’re all...ready for next year with it...it took a big chunk of time to build consensus and get everybody’s buy in.”

Sam summarized the component of “development over time” with the following statement:

Each year I feel more affirmed, getting to do what I do because of all the conversations, the connections, the things you learn about others so it’s been a great journey to be able to connect to other educators that share some of those same passions and help teaching and learning and move beyond just academics.

***Purpose/Focus***

In the current study, spiritual leaders defined purpose and focus through the lens of spirituality and having a “higher calling.” The top five codes found across all participant data which are situated within the purpose/focus component of the grounded theory are: having a “higher calling,” identifying personal purpose, knowing and promoting what you value, balancing what is asked of others, and having an impact (see Appendix H). Sam and Ellie had parallel statements about purpose/focus. Sam stated:

But I just feel like that is a separate piece of just knowing the higher calling of what we get to do day in and day out. And that...peace in your heart of that yes, you're gonna ride the highs and the lows, but there's always this is ...why we get to do what we do.

Ellie also connected to a higher calling as a purpose to lead in the school setting. “The idea of connecting to something that's...bigger than me, I think comes first of all. Just from being a part of...something that is working towards the same common goal.”

J. Scott and Melissa spoke of the purpose of leading as a higher calling situated in faith in God. J. Scott stated,

[God] brought me here for a reason, what is that reason? And it's I think, perhaps the people here didn't hear [God's Word]. So, and then that's something I want to work on and get back to. And to me that's lifting people up as part of that spirituality and...giving back and empowering people too.

Melissa stated, “But I think that's...how Jesus was. So He was...with everyone, so...I keep that in my...head a lot with how I lead.”

Speaking about purpose, Craig stated, “How can we be great individuals because we’re all called to be with our own unique gifts and talents and coming together to do great things is pretty powerful.”

David also connected purpose and focus to moral actions: “But my mission from 2004 was ‘to strive to live with a moral purpose, allowing my actions to speak louder than my words’.”

Grace, who did not anchor spirituality in a doctrine or specific faith, explained purpose as being connected with spirituality and a belief system to “feel kind of interconnected in different ways to different people for bigger reasons than maybe what’s right in front of us.” Grace went on and stated:

So gosh, I think it’s *foundational* to who I am that I believe so strongly. In the spirituality of kind of again, it’s back to the purpose and why we all do what we do, in essence, but I feel like my purpose is kind of twofold professionally in education to help staff and students in the academic lens of things, but then I really feel kind of a profound sense of helping people see how valuable they are, to even why they’re here, like their purpose, their contributions that maybe they’re not aware of both in students and adults.

J. Scott’s statement encompassed the actions of a spiritual leader promoting what is valued and knowing the purpose:

So, I think by promoting that, saying that and doing everything I can to help people be there with their family. I remember one time a kid, their kids are at a different district at a spelling bee contest, and they came back early. I’m like, “what the hell are you doing? Is it like done?” “No.” I go, “you need to leave.”

“Yeah, but we have a meeting.” Like, “I’m at the point where I’m not asking you, I’m telling you, you’re gonna leave, you’re gonna go back to that and hug your kid and tell them they did an awesome job.”

Placing family first as a value is mirrored all the way to the top of Ellie’s school district, as seen in Ellie’s statement:

This is our job. And we have to support that and...Dr. [Superintendent] talks about that balance and holding each other accountable for that balance and saying, it’s okay to go to your kid’s...Halloween parade or whatever silly thing it is and...knowing that everybody supports that.

J. Scott shared a story about a previous position held in a different district where there was a disconnect between a personal purpose and values and those of the district:

And, man, I’m trying to be pretty big on that here, or, again, back with the family things, those kinds of things. Like we just can’t be push, push, push, right? Like, I think that bigger district I went to my first day as a teacher there was, “if you think we’re asking you to and we put too much on your plate, go get a bigger plate.” And what a shitty thing to say to people. Like that was the most ridiculous thing I’ve ever heard. I think we got to be a little bit more cognizant of that.

Sam explained, “And I think knowing that, how is this going to impact others? And how can I make their not necessarily day to day easier, but...their lifestyle, their sense of belief and belonging.” Sam saw balance in the eyes of purpose and promoting the value of others as human beings.

The analysis of participants’ direct responses to how the enabling components of CTE are promoted by spiritual leaders provided a connection with purpose/focus and

embedded reflective practices. Of the twenty codes of the purpose/focus component of the grounded theory, ten of those codes co-occurred with embedded reflective practices. Processing how J. Scott reflected as a leader and also provided space and time for staff to reflect, J. Scott stated:

One of the things I'm going to be working on this year, too, is you know, having time where we get together, removing barriers, like I talked about my office a little bit how I rearranged it to remove those barriers. But when I think about staff meetings, we sat at lunch tables, everybody has at some point or another 10 to 15 people with their back to them. And recreating...the opportunity to have those emotional connections and in small group conversations and valuing, again, valuing their voice, valuing their individualism and giving them time for that.

The example of providing the space and time for reflective practices among a staff is an intentional practice to embed within the school setting according to Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo (2021) and the current study.

Melissa provided an example of embedded reflective practices that gave purpose to each staff member, evaluation. During the evaluation conversations Melissa had with staff members, Melissa described hearing many of the staff stating ideas and goals focused on the same outcome. Melissa took the opportunity to move the staff towards a goal by using the information from the evaluation conversations and led towards new conversations setting a goal described here, “But then there were conversations setting the stage for next year on here's what I want to try for next year.”

David spoke about evaluation conversations taking place at the end of a school year. A question asked by David to the staff members revolved around the changes and

impact each made throughout the year. David described how staff come to seeing the impact made:

Literally, you know, when they...start in and then they'll talk about...how it impacted certain students or they'll talk about how it changed their perspective or how it changed the way they viewed their own grades. And I've had people with tears running down their cheeks and they just, they kind of...catch themselves. And then I just wait a little bit and then I'll say, "I think it sounds to me like we've had a significant lasting change."

A summation of reflective practices enabled by spiritual leaders was given by Sam:

Because I feel like when you're reflective, you care about the next decision that you're going to make, versus if you're not reflective and you're not thinking the bigger picture. You're just trying to check the box and continue to move on and the way that you're always operated so it does, I think, reflection lends itself directly to improvement.

### ***Disposition***

According to the grounded theory in the current study, as a spiritual leader develops over time and becomes more confident in identity and purpose, a disposition emerges. The component of disposition encompasses how a spiritual leader carries oneself and describes the giving of oneself as a leader for the set purpose. Disposition, as a component of the current study's grounded theory, is grounded in a leader's spirituality. Ellie stated, "I just think that there's kind of a belief system that comes into play as a spiritual leader that you might not see as a just as a good leader."

There is an essence of a spiritual leader difficult to explain as seen in Melissa's statement, "I just think it's, it's just like, it's me. It's a huge piece of me...and how do I, how I am with people and I know it's kind of hard to explain."

J. Scott shared a story about a mentor who confronted J. Scott about the lack of integrity of self J. Scott carried from place to place. The mentor explained the story of being an orange. An orange, when squeezed, will always produce orange juice no matter where squeezed, what temperature is around the orange, who is around when the orange is squeezed, etc. The analogy of spiritual leaders being an orange is one J. Scott related to and stated:

"So actually, you can see my fake orange over there. But that's on my desk with my favorite Bible verse too. Just to remind me of that day...that spiritualness is being who you're intended to be everywhere, no matter where you're at."

Jay stated, "And I think more and more like, I can't stand there and preach to people. But kind of my belief is it's my job to behave in a way that represents what I believe."

Through participant data, the engagement of a spiritual leader through authenticity, humility, vulnerability and optimism emerged. J. Scott stated, "There's just a different level of authenticity" in the way a spiritual leader carries oneself and interacts with people.

Speaking about how a spiritual leader interacts and carries oneself, Jay stated, "I think your spiritual leaders are more engaged from their heart."

Humility and vulnerability were described through J. Scott's connection to Jesus in how he sees a spiritual leader emulating and carrying the qualities Jesus exuded:

I think Jesus was actually probably one of the most perfect leaders, right. And the constant humbleness, like even perhaps when He knew the answer, He either guided people towards an answer rather than telling them, a lot of cases. And I just think that being humble, like I was out of place for a long time, and the whole time I was uncomfortable and didn't know the answer and had to ask questions, and they had to teach me so I don't know. I guess it's like Him bending down and washing the feet of people that others question why in the world would He even do that. But I think that was one of His most remarkable qualities was His humbleness. And, and truthfully, the vulnerability I think just always comes back to those two things.

Melissa and David both spoke of vulnerability as a leader. Melissa stated, “And the one thing that I have done is made myself really vulnerable” to build trust, show the human side of a leader, and empower others.

While describing how David sees himself as a supportive leader, he stated, “So you have to be willing to get up, you have to be willing to fail” as a leader because “if relationships impact culture, like you have to be real.”

Presuming positivity, a thematic code used in the current study, emerged as a piece of a spiritual leader's disposition leading toward CTE. J. Scott stated,

But I think it's the kinds of conversations you have too, right? Like, every conversation is riddled with a little bit...of optimism too. And I think that's a lot of being a spiritual leader too is being eternally optimistic, even in those, hell, that first year, I gotta be hon...I mean, it really sucked my first year here.

Presuming positivity came out in Grace's interview as well. Speaking about gathering feedback on a new initiative, Grace stated, "And getting out of the weeds of side conversations about how this stinks and how this isn't working, but instead just always assume that we did our best, assume best intent and that we want that feedback."

David stated, "You know, nobody shows up to work every day and with the idea that, 'golly, I can't wait to struggle today.'"

Disposition, as a component of the current study's grounded theory, includes not only the essence of who the spiritual leader is as a way of being and interacting with others, but also connects to the enabling components of CTE. Of the thirty-four codes used under the disposition category (see Appendix I), twenty-one codes co-occurred under the enabling component of supportive leadership. An example of how disposition and supportive leadership intertwine comes from J. Scott. J. Scott stated:

And even when someone's not performing as well as they should, I think you're doing them a disservice if you continue to allow them to do that. But you can do that in two ways, right? Like, you can swing a big hammer. Or you can go in there and roll up your sleeves and say, let's do this together.

Craig also spoke about supporting the staff through collaborative practices: "And so really, just, it's not about me, it's about us together, creating solutions to help our kids." Craig's statement was made in regard to how a spiritual leader builds consensus, and within consensus building, Craig spoke about needing to be supportive of others.

Sam spoke of how hard the work can be at times and remaining the leader who others know will always be there for others. Sam stated:

There's blood, sweat, and tears in the things we have to do sometimes, and to help [staff members] get through it. The highs and the lows, they have to know that you'll be able to, like, they can come to you with anything.

In the disposition component, the idea of "dying to self" emerged. "Dying to self," an in vivo code used in analyzing the current data, encompassed two additional thematic codes of doing what it takes and creating the space for others. Sam stated, "I think that spirituality lens is that because you're dying to self, you're providing that space for others to take over."

As Tina spoke about preparing for a new leadership position and exploring the life and culture of the new building, Tina stated:

And so I spent my summer kind of studying that and trying to absorb as much of it as I could so that I could take it in, make myself a part of it, and then...I don't want to say that it leads me where I'm supposed to go, but I sort of do think that. I just am always trying to like physically and emotionally and energetically be open so that things can come and I receive my energy and go with others.

When Tina stood in front of the staff and spoke, Tina shared the three personal, core values held as a leader. Tina, speaking about a core value, stated, "I will never ask you to do anything I would not do myself."

As all ten participants described how spiritual leaders promote CTE in the school setting, the core of who one is was brought into how one leads towards the purpose and supports the staff. Disposition leads into how a spiritual leader connects with others and moves to action to promote CTE.

### ***Human Connection***

Of all five components of the current study's grounded theory, human connection emerged as the second most embedded component. There were forty-one codes under five categories making up the human connection component (see Appendix J). The forty-one codes attached to approximately 53% of all excerpts with or without co-code occurrences. The frequency of the human connection codes across all data demonstrates how embedded the component is in how a spiritual leader promotes CTE in a school setting. Within the coding of Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo's (2021) five first order factors to enable CTE, each factor co-occurred with over 50% of the human connection codes; empowering teachers had the most code co-occurrences with thirty two of the forty-one codes.

Empowering others emerged as both knowing the individual, the strengths, needs, motivations of each person, as well as placing teachers in positions where each is able to use those strengths. Tina spoke about getting to know people by physically being with the school community, "Because I can think lots of things from this desk, but if I'm not out seeing and being with kids and being with teachers, then I don't know what their needs are, or strengths." Tina reflected that "it starts at a human level because their emotional needs have to be taken care of first."

J. Scott reflected on personal enjoyment of receiving notes of acknowledgement and noted not everyone enjoys receiving acknowledgement in the same manner. J. Scott reflected, "So, I need to step back from my lens and open that up a little bit and really individualize what each person needs for support and encouragement."

Sam stated, “And so that comes to, that really knowing your people, what motivates them and how they think and then getting them to recognize and acknowledge how each other think too.”

Building relationships between and among all stakeholders emerged through the data. David stated, “But ultimately the results is...how we...get along together and how we have an impact on one another and that’s staff to staff, that’s staff to student, student to student.”

Referring to leading through a global pandemic, Melissa reflected on how solid relationships among the staff served in a positive way: “I mean, it’s crazy that, I can’t believe the last two years and how something that could have been so hard, has really brought us all together, because we’ve been there for each other.” Coming out of the pandemic Melissa stated, “The relationships that I have with my staff right now are top notch.”

The data, from the current study, demonstrated a spiritual leader leaning on human connections as a means to navigate through difficult times. Tina spoke about hiring a certified teacher in the building who Tina believed would be perfect for the position. Having worked with Sally [pseudonym] in the past and knowing the strengths and talents Sally would bring, Tina had great faith in Sally; however, the human resource department pushed back on Tina for wanting to offer Sally the position. Tina was confident in the relationship with Sally and Sally’s expertise. Tina explained:

But that speaks also to the spiritual side of, I know Sally can do it. [Yeah]. I’ll tell you what, the people here freakin’ love her. Yesterday, two people in a team meeting said she’s amazing. I gotta tell her that yet, by the way.

*The Laramie Project*, a play about Matthew Shepard's murder in 1998 for being gay, was controversial in Melvin's small, rural community. Melvin explained navigating the push back from the community:

We did the Matthew Shepard play called *The Laramie Project*. [Oh.] Okay, so I allowed that to happen...But it's one of those things where...we have 350 kids in our building, what percentage of kids would probably be gay? What percentage of kids would probably be bullied? I said, "I think it's good to have those conversations." Whether you agree with it with your spirituality or morals or your values or not. It's one of those things that can make you a better human.

Melissa stated, "I want them to know that I truly, truly do love them." Melissa continued to state the importance of relationships:

It's empowering them to be able to feel like they can tell me anything, literally. Whether it's a personal journey of theirs, or it's something that they think about me. That's what I think is most important and it's also relationships too.

Melissa looks for opportunities to empower staff; so does Sam. Sam stated:

As a leader, with the decisions that I make, who can I rally together to get the right people in the right environments and the way to collect all that information to know what the best decision moving forward is.

Craig stated the importance of why human connection is important, "Because the way I'm believing in you and my staff, the way I empower and inspire you, I want you to take that into the classroom" and empower and inspire students.

There is a reciprocal effect in human connection back to the development over time.

Craig described changing over time as a leader in how collaboration was implemented. Craig stated, “Over the years I’ve discovered adaptive decisions and district level decisions where it is okay to make decisions. And then other times, we need to get the involvement of the entire system through collaboration.”

Ellie spoke of the development in personal leadership over time and the comfort level which grew in support to others in a more confident way:

I think COVID probably really emphasized a lot of this, but when people would reach out with things that they were struggling with, or the loss of a loved one or any of that stuff and I used to always...say, “thinking of you” or you know, “sending strength” and now I’m really at a place where I can open the door and just say, “You know what...I’ll be keeping you in my prayers” and include my own faith into my answer, and you find then that people either don’t latch on to that or they do, right? Or you do open some conversations and doors. And so I think just as a leader, I probably got more comfortable in being able to say...that as a response. And then...I think it helps different kinds of conversations.

Melvin spoke about changing over the last thirteen years as a leader in the openness and understanding of others: “Being open and understanding, and it’s probably changed over the last 13 years from the point of my openness towards letting things go.”

As J. Scott talked about the next evaluation conversations with staff, J. Scott reflected on the development over the course of the last year in getting to know how others needed support:

Last year, I did my fall check ins, because I had to, but really what the conversation was me getting to know them a little bit more. How can I support

them, and then doing it again in the spring. But it's really more about them. Put all the other stuff aside.

According to the analyzed data, spiritual leaders develop over time, and so do the followers of the leader. Grace spoke about the development of trust with the staff and how Grace is able to lead after five years without doubt:

And so I feel like...it may have taken, this is my fifth year as a school administrator. And I think in year five, there isn't a person in this building that I don't think knows me for my like 'why' of what I do, or trust that I have some version of why we're doing things and they just roll with it because I think that they feel that I trust them the same.

The cyclical component of the grounded theory is evident in how through getting to know others, building trust and more solid relationships, a spiritual leader develops a different kind of confidence, understanding and way of going about leading.

### ***Actions***

Of all five components of the grounded theory, actions emerged from the data the most. There are thirty-five codes under four categories making up the actions component (see Appendix K). The thirty-five codes attached to approximately 54% of all excerpts with or without code co-occurrences. The frequency of the actions codes across all data demonstrates how embedded the component is in how a spiritual leader promotes CTE in a school setting. Within the coding of Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo's (2021) five first-order factors to enable CTE, each factor co-occurred with over 63% of the action codes; teacher cohesive knowledge had the most code co-occurrences with twenty eight of the thirty-five codes (80%). Embedded reflective practices had 26 of the 35 codes (74%) co-

occur between embedded reflective practices and actions; empowering teachers code co-occurred with 71% of the actions codes; supportive leadership code co-occurred with 69% of the actions codes; and building consensus code co-occurred with 63% of the actions codes.

Thematic codes for the grounded theory component of actions fell under four categories: listening, navigating challenges, recognizing and acknowledging others' strengths, and building consensus. Stated by Melissa, "I'm always there to listen."

Melvin echoed Melissa when responding to what teachers would say is a supportive practice portrayed by Melvin. Melvin stated, "I would say they would say that I'm...you wouldn't necessarily think this but I've gotten better at it, is listening."

Ellie also stated listening as a supportive practice led with: "I think teachers would probably feel supported in the fact I...do want input, so I listen a lot."

Listening is heard as a practice from Jay as a skill needed as a leader; however, listening does not mean action must follow. Jay stated, "I think just listening. The hard part is that people equate listening with action. [Yeah.] And that's not [pause]...To me, that's not always the case."

J. Scott reflected on the first conversation had with the staff, and how the staff continues to hold J. Scott accountable:

I think one of the first things I said to my staff and they bring it up now is, 'God gave me two ears and one mouth for a reason.' So, I listen a lot more than I talk, especially at first.

Navigating challenges emerged as a category encompassing thematic codes like gathering input and feedback, observing, and building teacher cohesive knowledge. Sam

reflected on how modeling as a leader how to receive feedback as a positive trait can produce a positive environment where others will also want and receive feedback positively. Sam reflected:

If [the leader is] soliciting feedback, I'm open to feedback too. But if you kind of shut that down and...operate in a way of all my ideas need to be pushed out, then it's hard to then expect them to want feedback too. So, I think it starts with yourself of opening yourself up to it. So that way you then can provide it down the road after trust has been established.

Melissa also spoke about gathering feedback as a leader in order to grow and better serve others, "And like tell me what you think about my leadership. 'How can I be a better leader? What's one thing you or what is something that you wish I knew?'"

Craig echoed Melissa in wanting to hear feedback on how to become a better leader when stating, "If there's a teacher that doesn't feel like I support them, I want to hear that."

Ellie spoke about the need to gain input and being able to see each situation from different perspectives when making decisions and navigating the situations arising in a school. Ellie stated:

So my viewpoint as a...principal is very different than a classroom teacher than a counselor. And so, when you're gathering input from all of those stakeholders, then you're...getting that buy in too, because people feel like they are a part of the decision-making process.

Grace talked about ending a meeting or an event with asking for feedback in order to improve for future situations. Grace stated:

A lot of times we will end either a situation or a meeting and I will simply pause and ask the people around the table, ‘What do you think went well? If you were me, what would you foresee could be more beneficial if we were to have to do this again?’

Through answering how a spiritual leader builds consensus, J. Scott stated, “So main idea was mine, how it’s going to live, is theirs. But not micromanaging, listening and again, letting people be recognized and heard.”

Craig also stated the importance of recognizing the strengths of others while working to build consensus. When responding to the question of how a spiritual leader builds consensus, Craig stated, “Continue to believe in the strengths of others.”

Recognizing and acknowledging the strengths of others resonated with J. Scott. J. Scott stated, “Obviously, as a leader, I think, a skill you have to have is observing talent, and drawing that out of people.”

David also made the connections between identifying as a spiritual leader and allowing the strengths of others to be seen and acknowledged while building teacher cohesive knowledge. Responding to how a spiritual leader builds teacher cohesive knowledge, David stated:

I think...you know, I again I’d never intentionally thought about that as a spiritual connection, but it’s probably some of the same type of style of...providing the opportunity to be their own person and show their strengths and then go on from there.

Sam spoke of recognizing the gifts of others during the process of building teacher cohesive knowledge. Sam stated, “And so sometimes it’s the fact being, creating

an openness, but giving them the chance to see each other in action to think that then they recognize the gifts in one another.”

Summarizing the component of actions, Craig stated:

So, I believe that everyone is given gifts that they can negatively or positively impact our society. And trying to one, figure out what those gifts and strengths are, whether that's through surveys or just watching and observing or having conversations.

As a spiritual leader works to gain feedback and input, recognize others, build consensus and listen, there is a reciprocal relationship with development over time. Jay talked about being unsure of how to move forward with building teacher cohesive knowledge while recognizing the current challenges:

Right now, I don't have a good answer for that because...that question is probably my biggest hurdle right now. [Yeah.] Where I'm at, I currently have people that work in their own little... room. They don't really...care what goes on next door to them. Now, they're all friends. They...all get along well. [Yeah.] But when it comes to the education part of it, you know, moved a few bricks on them this year. And they didn't like it because they've done the same thing since 2000.

Right? [Yeah.] But part of that is knowing what the person next door is doing and the one on the other side is doing and also so that we can be consistent in expectations and what we want for the experience from our kids.

Tina also spoke of the processes of promoting CTE taking time to build: “And I think part of that consensus building is over time as well because people have to learn to

trust you and know your core values and how your decision processes fall within all of those things.”

Speaking about building consensus, Sam reflected on the development over time the process needs:

It’s...knowing what pace to go like okay, sometimes you have to go slow to go fast or I have to present this idea, knowing how that person or that group of people think and have to present it in a way that allows them to kind of fester on it and think about the benefits of and instead of saying, “Hey, this is what we want to do.”

Ellie summed the idea of needing time to develop ideas and move the staff towards the goal by stating, “I really do value input. I know that you just have to give people time to process.”

### **Summary**

Amidst the events of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Black Lives Matter movement and the 2020 presidential elections, ten titled building level public school leaders who self-acknowledged as a spiritual leader were interviewed. The interviews were transcribed, coded and analyzed which led to defining leading spiritually through the emergence of four themes: mindset, human connection, higher calling, and actions. A spiritual leader holds a mindset encompassing knowing, promoting, and living out values and beliefs in a transcendental manner to serve others for a spiritually grounded purpose greater than oneself. Human connection encompasses how a spiritual leader works in a collective through service for others and “speaking through action” rather than words. Participants described values of trust, care, humility and patience. At the core of spiritual

leaders is an inner self sustained through a belief in the work a spiritual leader does is greater than oneself. Holding onto a higher calling with a need for human connection and a mindset on the greater purpose moves a spiritual leader to action. The action theme revolves around balancing what is asked of followers, having intentionality, navigating challenges, building relationships, listening, and acknowledging others' strengths. Each of the four leading spiritually themes tied to previous spiritual leadership research literature.

A grounded theory emerged from the current research data through the components of development over time, purpose/focus, disposition, human connection and actions. Over the course of time, a spiritual leader develops a disposition and purpose/focus that lead to human connection and action. Action and human connection lead back to developing over time (see Figure 2). People and ideas develop over the course of time, as do the enabling components of CTE. Through the process of growing and changing, a spiritual leader identifies with a purpose and leads with a focus on something greater than oneself reflecting the spirituality held through action and human connection. The purpose/focus a spiritual leader holds is about having a higher calling, an impact, and knowing and promoting what is valued. The purpose/focus leads a leader to action and human connection. The human connection component focuses on building relationships through compassion and support while building trust and empowering others. The actions a spiritual leader takes to promote CTE revolve around listening, navigating challenges, recognizing and acknowledging other's strengths and building the enabling components of CTE.

In the following chapter, Chapter 5, the findings are summarized and discussed by answering the research questions and presenting the emerging grounded theory in context of current peer-reviewed research literature. Limitations of the current research and implications for specific audiences are presented and suggestions are given for further research.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of the current study was to explore how spiritual leadership among public school administrators in the United States promotes collective teacher efficacy (CTE). The central research question for the study was: How do spiritual leaders, in a public school setting, promote CTE? The two guiding questions, with the developed interview protocol (Appendix A), ensuring the central research question was answered were:

1. How is decision-making impacted by a spiritual leader's self-acknowledged spirituality in a public school setting?
2. What actions do school administrators take to promote the components of CTE?

Chapter 4 outlined the findings of the current study. The four themes: mindset, human connection, higher calling, and actions, emerged from the data defining spiritual leadership within the current study and was connected to current research literature, demonstrating concurrence with Fry's (2003, 2005, 2008) spiritual leadership theory (SLT). After displaying the leading spiritually data, the grounded theory that emerged from the current data was presented through five components: development over time, purpose/focus, disposition, human connection, and actions (see Figure 2). Chapter 5 summarizes the study, answers the research questions, discusses the limitations and implications of the study, and presents suggestions for further research.

### **Summary of the Study**

Through the current qualitative, grounded theory study, the researcher conducted ten semi-structured interviews with participants who held a titled, building level leadership position in a public school in the United States during July, August, and

September of 2022. In addition, each participant self-acknowledged as a spiritual leader. The questions asked of the participants revolved around how each leader leads towards the five related first-order factors described by Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo (2021) as enabling conditions for CTE (see Appendix A). The interviews were transcribed, coded and analyzed for themes for leading spiritually in the current context as well as analyzed for an emerging grounded theory to describe how spiritual leaders, in a public school setting, in the United States promote CTE.

Participants were interviewed during July, August and September of 2022, except for the two pilot interviews which were conducted in January and February 2022 respectively. The timing of the interviews occurred following the COVID-19 pandemic of 2019-2022, the aftermath of the 2020 presidential elections, and amidst the Black Lives Matter movement. The context of the current study provided different challenges to navigate as a leader, and leaders spoke about the COVID-19 pandemic obstacles in the decision-making processes and intentional promotion of CTE.

As the purpose of the current study was to explore how spiritual leadership among public school administrators promoted CTE, a ground theory approach was most appropriate. A grounded theory approach was employed for the purposes of explaining interactions within a phenomenon to inductively develop a theory or general explanation directly out of the data collected (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Creswell & Creswell Báez, 2021). In doing so, the researcher explored how elements of spiritual leadership may predict the occurrence of CTE, thereby providing a framework for leaders to intentionally employ to promote CTE within the school setting. In addition to the grounded theory contributing to the body of research connecting spiritual leadership and CTE, the review

of literature presented in Chapter 2 provided connections between spiritual leadership and CTE through peer-reviewed literature that included international studies.

A grounded theory emerged from the data in the current study (see Figure 2) with five components: development over time, purpose/focus, disposition, human connection, and actions. The theory starts with the element of time. The theme, development over time, encompasses not only the development of CTE over time but also the development of the spiritual leader over the course of time with experiences and support.

The development of CTE and the spiritual leader leads to purpose/focus and disposition. The purpose/focus a spiritual leader holds is about having a higher calling, an impact, and knowing and promoting what is valued. The purpose/focus leads a leader to action and human connection. Purpose/focus, along with development over time, influences a leader's disposition.

Disposition emerged as a component of the grounded theory explaining how a spiritual leader carries oneself and encompasses the giving of oneself as a leader while leading towards CTE. Disposition and purpose/focus lead to human connection and action. Human connection is the component of the grounded theory which demonstrates how a spiritual leader treats others and how the leader wants others to feel.

The final component of the grounded theory is actions. Actions describe the "what" a spiritual leader does that can be seen as CTE is promoted. Human connection and actions are reciprocal to one another and also lead back to developing the leader. In a cyclical manner, the theory demonstrates the ongoing development of a spiritual leader promoting CTE (see Figure 2).

### **Discussion of Research Questions**

The purpose of the current study was to explore how spiritual leaders, in a public school setting, in the United States promote CTE by answering the central question: How do spiritual leaders, in a public school setting, promote CTE? The two guiding questions designed to ensure the central research question was answered were:

1. How is decision-making impacted by a spiritual leader's self-acknowledged spirituality in a public school setting?
2. What actions do school administrators take to promote the components of CTE?

The following three sections of Chapter 5 will tie the data from the current study to previous research literature to answer the research questions.

#### **Guiding Question #1**

When leading towards CTE in a school setting, decisions need to be made in order to promote the enabling components. The first guiding question in the current research study was: How is decision-making impacted by a spiritual leader's self-acknowledged spirituality in a public school setting? In Fry's (2008) literature around the SLT, the inner life was described as the central core of the theory whereby a spiritual practice is "a fundamental source of inspiration and insight, [that] positively influences the development of (1) hope/faith in a transcendent vision of service to key stakeholders and (2) the values of altruistic love" (pp. 111-112). The current study found a spiritual leader's foundation of inspiration and insight to be grounded either in Jesus, a Biblical figure in the Christian doctrine, as someone who serves humbly knowing His purpose, or in the energy within the organization which grounds and inspires the leader in the decision-making process. The inner life of a leader cited by Fry (2008) is paralleled with

the mindset theme of leading spiritually in the current study where spiritual leaders are grounded in a spiritual practice while using spirituality as a guiding force, knowing and promoting what one values, being thankful, having a genuineness, finding joy, being “natural,” and creating “openness” (see Appendix F, Table F1).

Though there was no direct question asking participants about purpose, focus, balance or values, each participant gave a description of what the purpose for leading and being was and what that meant for the actions each took. Providing descriptions of purpose, values and balance woven into the responses for the questions asked demonstrated the value each leader places in purpose and balance, and how much purpose drives the actions of a spiritual leader. The results from the current study aligned with Sendjaya’s (2007) description of spiritual dimensions where spirituality in the workplace is described as a means of filling a purpose in which an individual is called to rather than just holding a job. In addition, according to Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009), meaningfulness in work exists when the work aligns with and/or fills an individual’s values or purpose.

A spiritual leader, in the current study, holds a mindset that encompasses knowing, promoting, and living out values and beliefs to serve others for a spiritually grounded purpose greater than themselves (see Appendix F, Table F1). The mindset theme aligns with Fry’s (2008) description of a spiritual leader. Fry’s (2008) theory also stated a necessity of “collective tolerance” (p. 114) for the different aspects of an inner/spiritual life so everyone is able to experience meaning and purpose through work without feeling ostracized. Collective tolerance of a spiritual leader also emerged as a theme in the current research as human connection. The collective tolerance found in the

current study parallels how Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009) outlined the importance of the interconnectedness of employees in a working environment where individuals can feel belonging and care for others.

Fairholm's (1997) statement, "visions come from the central core of the leader and reflect (or come to reflect) the central core of the group" (p. 28) paralleled the current research study's theme of human connection. Through the human connection theme in leading spiritually, a spiritual leader builds connections between and among others, encourages, empowers, and serves others through action while getting to know each person on the human level (see Appendix F, Table F2). Amanchukwu et al. (2015) also acknowledged, "Despite the many diverse styles of leadership, a good or effective leader inspires, motivates, and directs activities to help achieve group or organizational goals" (p. 6). According to the results of the current study, a spiritual leader speaks through action while serving others, and these actions allow a spiritual leader to inspire, motivate and direct toward the organizational goals. Through walking alongside, inspiring, motivating and directing others, a spiritual leader's knowledge of the organization and individual followers grows and guides the spiritual leader in the decision-making process.

Actions, an emerging theme from leading spiritually and one component of the grounded theory in the current study, connects with Chen and Yang's (2012) and Kaya's (2015) findings of a positive and significant relationship between spiritual leaders and organizational citizenship behaviors: altruism, sportsmanship, conscientiousness, and civic virtue. Aligned with altruism, the current study's results demonstrate the actions of building relationships and acknowledging others' strengths. If a leader holds a sense of inner life, then a leader will care for the professional and personal needs of others through

action and decision-making (Fairholm, 1997). Sportsmanship, the ability to deal with things not going as planned, is aligned with the current study's actions a spiritual leader takes in navigating challenges and finding the good. Finding the good aspect of a spiritual leader was described by Fairholm (1997) as a type of optimism a leader holds while leading and making decisions. Conscientiousness, or going beyond the expectations of the job, is aligned with how a leader has intentionality in actions and decision-making (see Appendix F, Table F4).

Within one aspect of the social context of the current study, participants were navigating how to lead through and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. The data of the current study demonstrated an intentionality of a spiritual leader to move from an isolated, pandemic-type decision-making format to moving towards a desire for more collaborative decision-making efforts. Leading through the COVID-19 pandemic, spiritual leaders spoke about leaning on faith and core values as difficult decisions needed to be made. Leading with a more collaborative approach aligns with both Ross et al. (2004) and Donohoo et al.'s (2020) conclusion that teachers must have influence over decisions affecting teaching and learning in order to share a sense of CTE.

The data from the grounded theory components of development over time and actions demonstrate how a spiritual leader reflects over and gathers feedback and input for decisions made. Spiritual leaders, in the current study, took the time to listen, reflect, and pray over the decisions needing to be made while seeking feedback and input from staff members during the decision-making process. The process of reflection and gathering feedback and input from staff aligns with Fry's (2008) SLT where members of

an organization come to feel appreciated and understood through the spiritual practices of leading from a spiritual leader.

Ultimately, according to the current study's results, a spiritual leader's decision-making is impacted by a leader's spirituality in a public school setting through the leader's higher calling, mindset and human connection that leads to action and decision-making. Specifically, according to all participant data in the current study, a spiritual leader's spirituality is the source of inspiration and purpose that drives the actions a spiritual leader takes in making a decision. A spiritual leader's deep care and concern for others moves a leader to intentionality, reflection, and prayer in making decisions with input and feedback from others.

### **Guiding Question #2**

Spiritual leaders within the current study took action to promote the components of CTE in different ways. Cited in previous theoretical research literature, school administrators focus on different types of collective efficacy-building experiences and/or sources (Bandura, 1997). Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory of building human agency provided a guide for leaders in what types of experiences to provide organizations to promote CTE. The four sources or experiences people use to build efficacy are: enactive mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and affective states (Bandura, 1997). Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo (2021) outlined five enabling components promoting CTE which leaders are able to take action around. The "five related first-order factors that describe the enabling conditions for CTE [are]: Empowered Teachers, Embedded Reflective Practices, Cohesive Teacher Knowledge, Goal Consensus, and Supportive Leadership" (Donohoo, et al., 2020, p. 161). Both Bandura's

(1997) efficacy building experiences/sources and Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo's (2021) five enabling components are woven in the current data.

Empowering teachers is the first component to weave through the data in the current study. According to the analyzed results of the current study, spiritual leaders take action to empower others by loving and caring for followers by first getting to know the individual and providing what each person needs to feel supported; therefore, having the knowledge as a leader to intentionally lift people up and inspire others to be the best self for the school and students. In parallel with Fairhom's (1997) statement that "deep caring is the cornerstone of spiritual values" (p. 56), there is evidence, in the current study, of helping others find a personal value and life's purpose woven in the data.

Goddard et al.'s (2015) analysis of CTE literature demonstrated the importance of leaders working and learning alongside teachers; when collaborative learning between leaders and teachers occurs, leaders are more effective in sharing knowledge, giving feedback, and supporting in the areas most in need. In order to get to know others on a deep level, participants in the current study described walking alongside others to observe the strengths of each individual and how to utilize and place each person in a position to be successful to move the organization forward while demonstrating the value each brings to the school. Houston and Sokolow (2006), in discussing spiritual leadership, suggested spiritual leaders' empowerment of others through the use of unique gifts and talents allows members to use individual strengths while finding success, thereby permitting employees to have reciprocal experiences that support Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory from which collective efficacy derives. The results of the study demonstrated how leaders recognized and acknowledged others' strengths in various

ways. According to the current study, leaders write notes, text, pray, and/or give words of encouragement to acknowledge others' strengths which provide a positive affective state to build CTE and a sense of belonging (Bandura, 1991).

In the current study, the action of listening was utilized by leaders often to navigate challenges and gather feedback and input. Listening and remaining open to feedback was used by leaders of the current study to model growth, trust, and respect for others which aligns with providing vicarious experiences as described by Bandura (1997) to promote CTE. Seen in the results of the current study, remaining open and creating an openness for others aligned with Strahan née Brown et al.'s (2019) findings that "the visibility and approachability of senior staff...were all important in raising and sustaining CE" (p. 155).

Feedback was intentionally gathered by leaders in the current study to improve as leaders and to better support others and the systems within the school setting. In seeking feedback and input, leaders in the current study created an openness for others to observe and recognize each others' strengths, building a level of "social sensitivity" that Donohoo et al. (2018) stated is necessary in order to have a collective impact. Ultimately, the actions of the spiritual leaders, in the current study, which promoted CTE among the staff became reciprocal in practice as followers took on the same actions of receiving feedback, gathering input and listening to others that was seen in the leader. In addition, the actions of listening, gathering input and seeking feedback demonstrate what Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo (2021) described as supportive leadership as an enabling component of CTE.

In the current study, spiritual leaders promoted CTE through service to others. Fry (2005) explained the pursuit of spiritual well-being is about serving others. Service, a supportive leadership component (Arzonetti Hite & Donohoo, 2021), manifests in spiritual leaders as action according to the results of the current study. The actions of service a spiritual leader demonstrated in the current study were the giving of oneself in order to reflect a higher purpose and produce trust, demonstrate humility, and maintain patience for others. Spiritual leaders in the current study walked alongside others to guide and support the work at hand while providing resources and structure to build trust as a foundation for the collective; these actions of promoting CTE found in the current study align with Goddard et al.'s (2015) research results. Goddard et al.'s (2015) findings demonstrated the importance of leaders working and learning alongside teachers and concluded that leaders should spend time with teachers in the classroom and empower others.

School leaders, in the current study, used collaboration and adaptive decision-making strategies to build consensus and empower others to invest in the goals and processes of the school. According to the current study's results, leaders were intentional about who was around the table making decisions while also including individuals who may be skeptical of the initiative at hand. Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo (2021) described a collaborative process to develop a shared vision by involving staff where all voices are heard. Spiritual leaders promote growth in others by providing opportunities for success both felt and seen. Successful experiences act as enactive mastery experiences in promoting CTE (Bandura, 1997) and are the most powerful of the sources (Goddard, 2001). Spiritual leaders, in the current study, broke initiatives down into chunks and

allowed individuals to experience and observe success as a strategy to build CTE around a specific process or program implemented to make progress towards the goal. Goal consensus provides voice and clarity for school staff while building consensus, collective efficacy and a sense of ownership (Arzonetti Hite & Donohoo, 2021).

In the current study, leaders used reflection during decision-making processes, modeled reflective practices by gathering feedback and input, putting feedback and input into action, and providing avenues for others to self and group reflect. Reflection is a common practice utilized by spiritual leaders while promoting CTE. Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo (2021) stated that leaders get to own feedback as a reflective practice; giving teachers feedback and teachers accepting feedback is only possible when teachers trust and believe in the leader. Both Ross et al. (2004) and Donohoo et al. (2020) concluded teachers must have influence over decisions affecting curriculum, curriculum materials, professional development, and building level policies to share a sense of CTE. Reflection, by a spiritual leader in the current study, looks like praying, journaling, and just taking time to make a decision. According to the current study's results, leaders also embedded reflective practices within the school setting to build cohesive knowledge, consensus, and personal and professional growth for staff members. Embedded reflective practices, cited by Arzonetti Hite and Donohoo (2021) as an enabling component of CTE, are utilized by leaders from the current study through evaluations, various meeting settings, and professional learning communities.

In the current study, school administrators promoted CTE through empowering teachers by first getting to know each individual while working alongside each. Leaders recognized and acknowledged others in various ways and listened while remaining open

to feedback and input. While promoting the elements of CTE, leaders worked collaboratively to build consensus while being in service to others. Leaders used reflection and embedded reflective practices within the school setting to grow and promote CTE.

### **Grounded Theory**

In answering the central question, how do spiritual leaders, in a public school setting, promote CTE, a grounded theory emerged from the data (see Figure 2). The theory contains five intertwining elements, reciprocal in nature: development over time, purpose/focus, disposition, human connection, and actions. A spiritual leader continually grows spiritually, personally and professionally throughout life and work. The growth occurs as a result of connecting with others and the actions taken by a leader to fulfill an identified purpose. Not only does a leader develop over time, so does the promotion and growth of CTE take time. As a leader and CTE develop, a greater purpose or focus is identified and individual and organizational actions are aligned to strive towards the purpose. Who a leader becomes and what purpose is being served leads to the disposition of the leader in how one carries oneself, what visible actions one takes, and how one interacts with others. Through connecting with others and taking action, a leader learns and grows, further developing oneself as a leader and how CTE is promoted.

The grounded theory aligns with Fry's (2008) work where developing oneself as a leader through an inner, spiritual life was foundational to the SLT (see Figure 1). A leader who cultivates an:

inner life or spiritual practice will be more likely to have, or want to develop the other centered values of altruistic love and a transcendent vision of service to key

stakeholders and the hope/faith to “do what it takes” to achieve the vision. (p. 113).

Like Fry’s (2008) research, the current study found the development over time of a leader also leads to creating a purpose and/or focus for oneself and the organization. Spiritual leaders, in the current study, identified purpose as something greater than oneself either connected to a higher being or to the energy within an organization. Holding a purpose in something greater than oneself aligned with Sendjaya’s (2007) description of spiritual dimensions where spirituality in the workplace is described as a means of filling a purpose in which an individual is called to rather than holding a job. The higher calling, as demonstrated in the findings of the current study, pushes a leader to do whatever it takes to support others and continually strive to become a more humble and servant leader. In Fry’s (2008) work, leaders “‘do what it takes’ to achieve the vision” (p. 113), and in the current study, leaders described the same work as ‘dying to self.’

In the grounded theory, ‘dying to self’ lies in the disposition element of leading spiritually to promote CTE. How a spiritual leader carries oneself while promoting CTE sits in the leader’s spirituality, or inner life as seen in Fry’s (2008) SLT. Spirituality, a leader’s intangible self, is where morals and values are created (Fairholm, 1997) and is connected to the human spirit (Bstan-’dzin-rgya-mtsho, 1999). Bstan-’dzin-rgya-mtsho [Dalai Lama] (1999) stated the human spirit consists of “love and compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, a sense of responsibility, a sense of harmony—which bring happiness to both self and others” (p. 22). In the current study, spiritual leaders demonstrated a strong need for human connection and remained vulnerable, created a sort of openness, remained thankful, presumed positivity and spoke through action within

one's disposition leading towards CTE. Spiritual leaders lean on the element of human connection to promote CTE through leading with compassion, love, support, trust and belonging.

A piece of Özgenel and Ankaralıoğlu's (2020) findings demonstrated spiritual leaders are "appreciated, respected, rewarded, in solidarity, communicated in a healthy way, they strive to fulfill their duties and responsibilities, and they are willing to solve problems" (p. 155). Spiritual leaders in the current study demonstrated the willingness to navigate challenges and solve problems through gathering input and feedback, making observations and building teacher cohesive knowledge. Difficulties arise in the leadership position and spiritual leaders, in the current study, leaned on the human connection to navigate through those times. In a similar manner, Strahan née Brown et al. (2019) found when structures are in place to support individuals through difficult times, levels of collective efficacy aid in feeling less isolated in negative emotions and in turn creates a more positive affective state.

Taghizadeh and Shokri (2015) cited visioning as having high leading and low dependence power and is the cornerstone to organizational and spiritual leadership. The results of the current study demonstrate that spiritual leaders empower others through actions. Collaborative decision-making, holding reflective conversations, placing others in positions of passion, and utilizing others' strengths are a few of the actions the participants cited in the current study. Placing people in positions where strengths are utilized aligns with what Bandura (1997) explained through social persuasion where a leader should not simply cultivate "people's belief in their capabilities, they [should]

structure activities for them in ways that bring success and avoid placing them prematurely in situations where they are likely to experience repeated failure” (p. 106).

In taking action, spiritual leaders in the current study created a common purpose and a shared vision. Building a vision and establishing a shared purpose is found to be the best predictor of CTE and is a skill of an effective leader (Kurz & Knight, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2008; Robinson et al., 2009; Ross et al., 2004). The results show the actions of building a shared vision, consensus, and teacher cohesive knowledge all take time to develop in efforts to promote CTE. Spiritual leaders, in this study, worked to build trust while demonstrating core values and modeling how decisions were made. According to the current study, as a spiritual leader worked to gain feedback and input, recognized others, built consensus and listened, there was a reciprocal relationship with development over time and an intertwining of actions which a leader took as a result of the purpose/focus and disposition a leader held among the other grounded theory elements. This finding in the current study aligns with Goddard et al.’s (2015) conclusion that leaders should set high standards, seek teacher input, spend time with teachers in the classroom, and empower others.

“Despite the many diverse styles of leadership, a good or effective leader inspires, motivates, and directs activities to help achieve group or organizational goals” (Amanchukwu et al., 2015, p. 6). Spiritual leaders are effective leaders who work to accomplish what Amanchukwu et al. (2015) presented: inspiring others, motivating others, and directing activities to move an organization forward or promoting CTE. The work of promoting CTE in a public school setting by spiritual leaders is done over the course of time through the identification of a purpose/focus, a disposition aligned with

the leader's higher calling performed through intentional actions, and connecting with others on a personal and professional level (see Figure 2).

### **Limitations of the Study**

All studies are subject to limitations, and the current study was no exception. First, though the researcher recruited participants through social media posts to recruit any participant across the United States wanting to participate, all participants in the study came from Nebraska. Including participants across the United States may have contributed to a greater transferability of the findings to other school settings. In addition, there was an assumption, by the researcher and premise of the study, that each of the participants was working towards building CTE at the school building level; however, this assumption may not have been true for each of the participants. Finally, there was not a longevity criterion in the leadership position to participate in the study. There were four participants who were leading in principal positions which were either new positions or each had only completed one year in that position. Prior to these head principal positions, all four participants had been in an assistant principal position so had historical knowledge of leading a building, but not full control over the decision-making processes. Adding an additional positional longevity criterion may have allowed participants to provide more examples of decision-making towards collective efficacy beyond the current context and could be a consideration for future studies on the topic.

### **Implications**

The results from the current study created a grounded theory to demonstrate how spiritual leaders, in a public school setting in the United States, promote CTE. The grounded theory can be used as a model or reference for school building leaders and

school leadership development programs. The following recommendations are provided for the target audiences.

### **Public School Leaders**

- Spiritual leadership is a holistic approach to leading not only encompassing skills and strategies, but grounding a leader in something greater than oneself providing stability and a foundation to lean on during difficult times and decision-making processes.
- Identifying as a spiritual leader does not have to mean subscribing to a religion or doctrine and does not mean evangelizing to the community served. Identifying as a spiritual leader can grow the confidence of a leader in how to lead and promote CTE.
- Leaders should intentionally promote CTE through interactions, decisions, and experiences provided to the school staff. CTE is built on relationships and experiences within the community which need to be intentionally created.
- The grounded theory created from the data of the current study can be used as a guide for reflection and development of self as a leader as well as the promotion of CTE in the school setting.
- Leaders should frequently reflect on the purpose of the work engaged in on a daily basis and ascertain the work being accomplished aligns with the identified goal. A leader needs to hold integrity to what grounds a leader: purpose/focus and core values (spirituality).

- Leaders should develop deep, caring relationships with and among individuals in the building by showing vulnerability, building trust and walking alongside the staff to promote CTE.
- Spiritual leaders can promote CTE; however, being a spiritual leader does not mean CTE will exist without intentional thought and action.

### **Leadership Development Programs**

- Leadership development programs can use the grounded theory created from the data of the current study as a guide for reflection and development of school leaders and the promotion of CTE in the school setting.
- Leadership development programs should provide opportunities for developing leaders to reflect on the individual's purpose for leading, the actions of a leader to align with the identified purpose, how to build productive relationships, and how a leader's disposition impacts the ability to lead towards CTE.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Throughout the process of conducting the current research study, options for further research surrounding the topic emerged.

1. This study was conducted qualitatively. In order to strengthen the relationship between spiritual leadership and CTE, a quantitative study could be conducted to investigate a possible correlation between perceived CTE in a school setting and perceived spirituality in a building leader.
2. The current study did not look at the variability of school community size. In order to determine if size of community and/or school makes a difference in

building CTE by a spiritual leader, a study needs to be conducted focusing on school community size.

3. The current study did not take into account the years of experience a school leader had as a titled building level leader. A future study needs to be conducted to determine if longevity in a position influences how a spiritual leader promotes CTE.
4. Gender identification of participants was not a factor in the current study. Designing a study to look at possible similarities and differences in how spiritual leaders lead to promote CTE by gender could be conducted to provide a more detailed theory for school leaders to utilize.
5. Spiritual leaders, as determined in this study, invest much of themselves into others. A future study may want to investigate if a spiritual leader finds the job of leading to be more mentally and/or emotionally taxing to determine the sustainability of a spiritual leader in a public school setting.
6. Due to one of the contexts of the current study, the COVID-19 pandemic hindered some of the natural work a leader does in a school. A future study may benefit from positionality outside of a worldwide crisis to reduce variability.
7. A future study is needed to determine if spiritual leaders in a public setting naturally compartmentalize spirituality because of the idea of separation of church and state or is it the concept of who a spiritual leader is that doesn't create a need or intentional thought towards how to use one's spirituality to lead in this way?

8. The study could be replicated to determine greater validity and transferability with a population of spiritual leaders across the United States to expand the participant pool and geographic experiences.

### **Conclusion**

The current study found four themes which emerged from the data defining spiritual leadership demonstrating concurrence with Fry's (2003, 2005, 2008) SLT. The results of this study show that a spiritual leader holds a mindset grounded in a higher calling, human connection and influences the actions of the leader. A spiritual leader promotes CTE as presented in the grounded theory. There are five components to the grounded theory: development over time, purpose/focus, disposition, human connection, and actions (see Figure 2). Each of these five components lead into the next and are reciprocal in nature. The researcher could not locate current, peer-reviewed research literature, at the time of the study, to fill the gap between spiritual leadership and CTE. This grounded theory begins to fill the gap by providing a framework of how a spiritual leader promotes CTE in a public school setting. Additionally, this study adds to the body of work and knowledge through the review of literature that includes international studies.

In 2020, Ecklund et al. found one in five people “see their work as a spiritual calling” (p. 8). With twenty percent of the nation’s workforce fulfilling a higher purpose grounded in a system of faith or in the energy of the environment, leaders also recognize the personal spirituality brought to the workplace and how spirituality affects making decisions and doing what is best for the organization. As a public school administrator, I, the researcher, walk into the school doors not shedding my spirituality. I bring my whole

self to work and carry my values at the core. I seek purpose and fulfill my life's calling by serving others in a public school building. My lived experience includes the void of acknowledging spirituality within both leaders and staff in public school buildings. To me, there is an importance to advance student academic outcomes, and also to acknowledge and promote spiritual well-being for others by promoting a more holistic work community. According to Hattie (2021), CTE has the greatest positive effect on student achievement along with other positive organizational outcomes. Spiritual leaders are able to promote CTE and positively affect student and staff experiences and organizational outcomes.

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## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

**Time of Interview:****Date:****Place:****Interviewer:** Anna Thoma**Interviewee:****Position of the interviewee:****Introduction:**

Good afternoon, my name is Anna. I am conducting interviews for a qualitative research course as part of an assignment to practice interviewing. I am hoping to gain your perspective in how you see the elements of spirituality influencing how you lead in your school setting; specifically, how you promote collective teacher efficacy. Are you willing to answer my questions? **(pause)**. Thank you. Do you have any questions before we begin? **(pause)**. I would like to record our interview; do I have your permission to do so? **(pause)**. Thank you.

**Icebreaker Question:** Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and about why you got into public school administration?

- a. How many years have you been in education?
- b. How many years have you served in a titled building level leadership position?

**Interview Content:**

1. What does spirituality mean to you?
2. What role does your spirituality play in how you lead?
  1. Can you give an example of when you needed to lean on your spirituality or when it was very apparent to you that your spirituality was playing a major role?
3. From your perspective, what differentiates a spiritual leader from just a great school leader?

4. How does being a spiritual leader influence how you build consensus within your school setting?
5. As a spiritual leader, how do you empower teachers?
6. How does being a spiritual leader influence how you promote cohesive teacher knowledge?
7. How does identifying as a spiritual leader influence the embedded reflective practices of your school setting?
8. What are elements of your leadership that teachers would identify as being supportive?
9. Do you have any questions for me?

**General Probes:**

- What else?
- Can you tell me more about that?
- Can you give me an example?

Thank you for your time. Your responses will be kept confidential and will only be used in my formal dissertation. In my dissertation, I will omit your name, using your pseudonym, and will remove any identifying information from the responses you shared.

## APPENDIX B: RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS EMAIL

Dear (INSERT NAME):

My name is Anna Thoma, and I currently serve as an Assistant Principal at Millard North Middle School in Omaha, NE. I am seeking participants in completing the research for my dissertation at Doane University (Doane University IRB #F22 001 DC IRB HS). The purpose of my study is to explore how spiritual leadership among public school administrators promotes collective teacher efficacy. I am seeking building level leaders in a K-12 public school district who identify as a spiritual leader and who are willing to answer 7-10 questions in a semi-structured interview. This interview can be held in person or via Zoom based on the convenience for those willing to participate and will last approximately 30 minutes. All information will be kept confidential and a pseudonym will be assigned to each participant. It is my hope this research will positively impact how public school leaders view and intentionally use their spirituality in leading to promote and enable collective teacher efficacy.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please respond to this email so we can set up a time to talk.

Thank you for your consideration,

Anna Thoma

Doctoral Student

Doane University

## APPENDIX C: RECRUITING SOCIAL MEDIA POST

I'm seeking building level leaders for my dissertation study who identify as a spiritual leader in a K-12 public school. If interested, please reach out to me through DM or email: [anna.thoma@doane.edu](mailto:anna.thoma@doane.edu). @DoaneUniversity #spiritualleadership #collectiveefficacy

## APPENDIX D: MEMBER CHECKING FORM

**Leading Spiritually: Public School Leaders Promoting Collective Teacher Efficacy**

Dear Research Participant,

Please review the enclosed analysis (categories and diagram) of our interview regarding how spiritual leaders among public school administrators promote collective teacher efficacy. Please note any discrepancies or questions you may have regarding the analysis. Please mark the proper line below to indicate your level of approval for your part in this project. Thank you.

My signature below indicates my approval of the analysis at one of the following levels:

\_\_\_\_ I approve of the analysis without reviewing it.

\_\_\_\_ I approve of the analysis without changes.

\_\_\_\_ I approve of the analysis with noted changes.

\_\_\_\_ I do not approve of the analysis.

---

Participant Signature

---

Date

---

Anna Thoma - Researcher

## APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

**Title of the Study:**

Leading Spiritually: Public School Leaders Promoting Collective Teacher Efficacy

**Principal Investigator:**

Anna M. Thoma, EdS., Doane University

**Purpose of the Study:**

The purpose of this study is to explore how spiritual leadership among public school administrators promotes collective teacher efficacy. This grounded theory study will be conducted through semi-structured interviews to compare concepts across participants' experiences to develop a theoretical framework for school leaders to use to promote collective teacher efficacy. You are invited to participate in this study because you identify as a spiritual leader working in a public school with a titled leadership position.

**Anticipated Interview Format and Time Commitment:**

For this study, each participant will participate in a semi-structured interview conducted by Anna Thoma. This interview will last approximately 30 minutes and will take place at a location of your choice. I would like to make an audio recording of the interview session for the purpose of future transcription, if you agree. It is possible I may contact you after the initial interview session, to request further dialogue, review the written interview transcript, or verify findings from the interview analysis. As with the initial interview, any/all follow-up interactions with me for the purposes of this study are optional.

**Risks and/or Discomforts:**

There is no known risk in participating with this study; however, if at any point you feel uncomfortable or wish to discontinue your participation, you may.

**Benefits and/or Compensation:**

This research is intended to positively impact how public school leaders view and intentionally use their spirituality in leading to promote and enable collective teacher efficacy. Collective teacher efficacy, as cited by Hattie (2021), is the number one factor in schools that positively affect student achievement. In addition, this work will contribute to the lacking body of literature on this topic. Public school administrators may gain information about or insight into spiritual leadership and collective teacher efficacy and find hope in the realization that the principal investigator aims to better understand and improve the connection between this leadership framework and the enabling components of collective teacher efficacy. As a participant of this study, I will send you a copy of the results of this study so you can see the results and implications that your insights may have on the leadership world.

**Confidentiality and Anonymity:**

Any information obtained during this study that could identify the participant will be kept strictly confidential. The recordings and transcripts of each interview will be kept

indefinitely and will be stored privately on the principal investigator's Google Drive. The information obtained through this study will be published in the principal investigator's dissertation, may be published in educational journals, or presented to the public. The participants' names will not be reported in the study or in any subsequent publications/presentations. A participant selected and/or mutually agreed upon pseudonyms will be used for all participants and their school or district.

**Institutional Review Board:**

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Studies Involving Human Subjects at Doane University F22 001 DC IRB HS. Doane University is committed to ensuring research involving human subjects is conducted with the highest possible ethical standards. You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered during, or before agreeing to participate in this study. You may contact Anna Thoma, Doane University doctoral student/principal investigator at 402-659-2499 or by emailing [anna.thoma@doane.edu](mailto:anna.thoma@doane.edu). If you have questions concerning your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the principal investigator or to report any concerns about the study, you may contact the Doane University Institutional Review Board by emailing [irb@doane.edu](mailto:irb@doane.edu).

**Voluntary Participation and Right to Withdraw:**

Please be aware that participation in this study is voluntary. You are under no obligation to participate in this study and can withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the principal investigator or Doane University.

**Written Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:**

Your signature grants voluntary consent to participate in this study and indicates that you understand your rights and the researcher's responsibilities. The principal investigator will give you a copy of this consent form for your records.

**Name and Signature:**

<b>(Print)</b>	<b>(Participant Pseudonym)</b>
<b>(Signature)</b>	<b>(Date)</b>
<b>(Researcher Signature)</b>	

I agree to be audio recorded: \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

**Name and Contact of Principal Investigator:**

Anna M. Thoma, EdS., Doctoral Student at Doane University  
402-659-2400, [anna.thoma@doane.edu](mailto:anna.thoma@doane.edu)

**Name and Contact of Secondary Investigator:**

Teresa G. Perkins, EdD., Director M.Ed. Educational Leadership, Doane University  
402-763-2994

[teresa.perkins@doane.edu](mailto:teresa.perkins@doane.edu)

## APPENDIX F: CODE TABLES FOR “LEADING SPRITUALLY”

Table F1. *Codes for the theme “Mindset” in leading spiritually*

Codes co-occurring with “leading spiritually”	Number of co-occurrences across data
"creating openness"	4
"developing over time"	7
"dying to self"	5
"finding joy"	4
"finding the good"	2
"having faith in yourself"	2
"living with moral purpose"	2
being "natural"	7
being energized/renewed	1
being thankful	3
being vulnerable	7
believing in purpose	1
carrying spirituality	7
defining career	1
exuding humility	2
growing professionally	2
having "genuineness"	6
having a focus	4
having a vision	1
holding differing beliefs and opinions	1
inspiring others	5

knowing "the why"	2
knowing and promoting what you value	11
presuming positivity	1
reflecting	9
seeing success	1
separating church and spirituality	7
using spirituality as a guiding force	5

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Table F2. *Codes for the theme "Human Connection" in leading spiritually*

Codes co-occurring with "leading spiritually"	Number of co-occurrences across data
"believing in people"	4
"getting to know the person"	1
"learning from one another"	1
"providing peace" (heart)	5
"recognizing the value they bring"	5
"rippling effect"	4
"speaking through action"	16
"taking care"	4
"walking alongside"	1
"working towards a common goal"	6
being "in it with them"	2
being mentored	1
believing in purpose	1
building a community	1

building collective efficacy	1
building consensus	12
building teacher cohesive knowledge	10
connecting personally	1
empowering others	8
encouraging others	2
experiencing crisis	3
feeling belonging	2
having empathy	4
instigating event for change	4
leading with compassion	4
leading with love	6
leading with support	6
leaning on one another	1
praying for others	6
reciprocating behaviors	2
seeing a role model	4
seeing the human	1
serving while leading	10
showing "grace and forgiveness"	3
supporting each other	2
trusting	4
using kindness	4

---

Table F3. *Codes for the theme “Higher Calling” in leading spiritually*

Codes co-occurring with “leading spiritually”	Number of co-occurrences across data
acknowledging others' spirituality	4
allowing others to "shine"	2
believing in a Higher Power	6
connecting with spirituality	1
having "meaning in work"	1
having a "higher calling"	17
having an identity	1
having an impact	3
identifying personal purpose	7
identifying spiritually	7
identifying with faith	6
intertwining spirituality in life/work	2
leaning on faith	3
loving job	2
making decision with spirituality as foundation	7
nourishing spiritual well-being	5
reflecting Christ	2
representing God	2

Table F4. *Codes for the theme “Actions” in leading spiritually*

Codes co-occurring with “leading spiritually”	Number of co-occurrences across data
"giving permission"	2
"giving them the confidence	1
"providing opportunities"	1
"taking risks"	2
balancing what is asked of others	4
building solid relationships	3
coaching	2
communicating clearly	1
coping with confrontation	1
defining school purpose	1
doing what it takes	2
feeling negative consequences	1
having a voice	3
having consistency	4
having intentionality	4
having the tough conversations	3
holding accountable	1
interacting with others (the how)	6
investing in others	3
listening	1
looking from other perspectives	7
making intentional connections	2

modeling	5
navigating challenges	7
observing	1
placing people within passions	1
recognizing and acknowledging others' strengths	3
seeing potential	1
sharing context	2

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## APPENDIX G: "DEVELOPING OVER TIME" CODE TABLE

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Codes for Development over Time	Number of Codes across Data
"developing over time"	41
"rippling effect"	13
being mentored	20
changing dynamics	2
defining career	59
discovering potential	1
experiencing crisis	15
experiencing success	4
feeling negative consequences	7
going home	1
growing professionally	26
identifying mismatched place	5
instigating event for change	12
intertwining compassion and faith	9
intertwining spirituality in life/work	5
making intentional connections	11
reciprocating behaviors	11
reflecting	33
seeing a challenge	4
seeing a role model	19
seeing success	8
separating church and spirituality	18

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## APPENDIX H: "PURPOSE/FOCUS" CODE TABLE

Codes for "purpose/focus"	Number of Codes across data
"living with moral purpose"	2
balancing what is asked of others	19
believing in a Higher Power	14
believing in purpose	4
defining school purpose	13
having "meaning in work"	3
having a "higher calling"	37
having a focus	10
having a sense of fulfillment	2
having a stake in it	2
having a vision	4
having an impact	15
identifying personal purpose	22
knowing "the why"	8
knowing and promoting what you value	21
leaning on faith	8
loving job	6
making decisions with spirituality as foundation	10
setting goals	3
understanding the need	1
using spirituality as guiding force	6

## APPENDIX I: "DISPOSITION" CODE TABLE

Codes for "Disposition"	Number of Codes across data
"being willing to fail"	2
"believing in people"	8
"creating openness"	25
"dying to self"	21
"finding joy"	10
"having faith in yourself"	4
"speaking through action"	28
"taking pride"	5
being "natural"	18
being approachable	3
being empowered	10
being energized/renewed	2
being thankful	7
being visible and present	3
being vulnerable	37
carrying spirituality	15
connecting with spirituality	4
doing what it takes	13
exuding humility	6
going beyond	6
having "genuineness"	12
having consistency	10

having inner strength	2
having intentionality	16
having patience	1
holding differing beliefs and opinions	3
identifying with faith	24
identifying spiritually	53
interacting with others (the how)	11
leading spiritually	164
making the most of it	2
presuming positivity	10
reflecting Christ	2
representing God	4

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## APPENDIX J: "HUMAN CONNECTION" CODE TABLE

Categories and codes for "Human Connection"	Number of codes across data
<b>leading with support</b>	<b>117</b>
<i>"checking in"</i>	5
<i>"providing peace" (heart)</i>	9
<i>"taking care"</i>	5
<i>nourishing spiritual well-being</i>	6
<i>seeing the human</i>	16
<i>acknowledging diversity</i>	12
<i>acknowledging others' spirituality</i>	10
<b>empowering others</b>	<b>108</b>
<i>"filling their buckets"</i>	3
<i>"giving them confidence"</i>	5
<i>encouraging others</i>	13
<i>coaching</i>	14
<i>inspiring others</i>	14
<b>trusting</b>	<b>37</b>
<i>"learning from one another"</i>	16
<i>collaborating</i>	4
<i>having a voice</i>	22
<i>feeling belonging</i>	11
<i>feeling safe</i>	4
<i>having an identity</i>	3
<i>allowing others to "shine"</i>	16

<b>building solid relationships</b>	<b>30</b>
<i>building a community</i>	21
<i>building teams</i>	13
<i>"getting to know the person"</i>	21
<i>connecting one another</i>	5
<i>connecting personally</i>	7
<i>leaning on one another</i>	12
<i>supporting each other</i>	20
<i>investing in others</i>	9
<i>"rallying people together"</i>	3
<i>seeing the human</i>	16
<i>allowing others to "shine"</i>	16
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<b>leading with compassion</b>	<b>20</b>
<i>"finding the good"</i>	6
<i>"recognizing the value they bring"</i>	17
<i>using kindness</i>	9
<i>placing people within passions</i>	6
<i>leading with love</i>	15
<i>seeing potential</i>	15
<i>having empathy</i>	13
<i>"seeing them in their element"</i>	2
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## APPENDIX K: "ACTIONS" CODE TABLE

Categories and codes for "Actions"	Number of codes across data
<b>building consensus</b>	<b>101</b>
<i>having norms</i>	1
<i>having the resources</i>	5
<i>creating routines</i>	4
<i>creating structure</i>	19
<i>posing questions</i>	8
<i>"working towards a common goal"</i>	18
<i>sharing context</i>	11
<b>navigating challenges</b>	<b>30</b>
<i>evaluating staff</i>	7
<i>gathering feedback</i>	15
<i>having the tough conversations</i>	14
<i>holding accountable</i>	7
<i>coping with confrontation</i>	5
<i>communicating clearly</i>	9
<i>observing</i>	12
<i>building teacher cohesive knowledge</i>	110
<i>(embedded reflective practices)</i>	95
<i>tying evaluation with professional development</i>	2
<b>recognizing &amp; acknowledging others' strengths</b>	<b>24</b>
<i>"providing opportunities"</i>	12
<i>getting others on board</i>	3

<i>"giving permission"</i>	7
<i>decision making together</i>	17
<i>recognizing others</i>	6
<i>"taking risks"</i>	17
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<b>listening</b>	<b>24</b>
<i>"walking alongside"</i>	7
<i>being "in it with them"</i>	13
<i>looking from other perspectives</i>	17
<i>serving while leading</i>	23
<i>modeling</i>	18
<i>building collective efficacy</i>	8
<i>showing "grace and forgiveness"</i>	7
<i>praying for others</i>	16
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