

AN EXPLORATION INTO THE EFFICACY OF CHRISTIAN SERVANT LEADERSHIP IN  
FACILITATING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE IN THE AUTOMOTIVE AFTERMARKET

by

Christopher A. Shadrick

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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## Abstract

Changing market dynamics is threatening the viability of stores in the automotive aftermarket. To provide business leaders strategies with strategies to implement organizational change and address shrinking revenue, this phenomenological study explored the lived experiences and perspectives of 20 front line, retail store managers in the automotive aftermarket. The information gathered during the interview process was analyzed using Moustakas' modified van Kaam method. In addition, the researcher used NVivo 12, a qualitative analytic software, to group, reduce, validate, and organize the data into themes. Six themes emerged that demonstrate the applicability of Christian servant leadership to the automotive aftermarket. These findings could create beneficial change and result in long-term organizational viability for firms that choose to consider the merits of Christian servant leadership.

*Keywords:* Christian servant leadership, organizational change, automotive aftermarket

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Dedication

Solus Christus!

## Acknowledgments

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Businesses face new challenges from competitors, regulators, and consumers. In addition, businesses seek to capitalize on new opportunities such as new markets, new technologies, and new consumer demands. In order to meet the demands of new challenges and opportunities, organizational change will be necessary. Business leaders must work to develop a plan of action and implement this plan. It takes buy in from front line employees. Leaders must select the correct leadership approach because the leadership approach taken represents the business change culture and determines the overall success of the change initiative.

### **Background of the Problem**

Many firms face competition from new sources of in the marketplace. Innovation creates new market segments while making other sectors obsolete (Parastuty, Schwartz, Breitnecker, & Harms, 2015). Consumer demand is ever changing. These are just a few of the many reasons firms may look to organizational change to remain relevant in the marketplace, expand into new markets, and integrate new technology (Spector, 2013).

At the heart of every change initiative, leaders are charged with the duty of designing an effective path forward and communicating the plan of action throughout the hierarchy (Overstreet, Hazen, Skipper, & Hanna, 2014). In order to rally the employees in such times, there are several leadership styles that can be utilized: autocratic, laissez faire, transformational, and transactional, just to name the most common. The problem businesses have is determining which style of leadership works best as the organization proceeds through organizational change?

Much of the literature addresses the effectiveness of many of the most common types of leadership styles. The bulk of the literature ignores Christian servant leadership. Robert

Greenleaf, a renowned author and former Director of Management Development at AT&T, is credited with coining the phrase servant leadership. Much of the second half of his career involved researching, documenting, and writing about the effectiveness of the servant leadership style in the operation of companies (Greenleaf, 1977). Greenleaf's work is secular in approach and completely disregards Christian servant leadership. Greenleaf's work leaves a gap in literature with no published research directly addressing Christian servant leadership. It can be said the two types of servant leadership are similar in approach (Blanchard & Hodges, 2005). Even with their similarities, there is a lack of literature with regard to applying servant leadership to organizational redesign in the automotive aftermarket. In addition, there has been no research conducted about the overall effectiveness of servant leadership in guiding organizational change and redesign in the automotive aftermarket.

### **Problem Statement**

The problem to be addressed is businesses are finding that leadership can hinder an organization's ability to make organizational changes to address shrinking revenue (Allen, Smith, & Silva, 2013; Seo et al., 2012). In fact, many businesses are facing the stark reality they must change course to remain viable entities in the marketplace (Exter, Grayson, & Maher, 2013). Retail firms face such challenges daily (Delaney, 2014; Brynjolfsson, Hu, & Rahman, 2013). Additionally, many firms are confronting the challenge of expanding into new markets as global consumers gain the financial means to obtain additional goods (Delaney, 2014; Spector, 2013). The overarching problem facing retailers in the automotive aftermarket is to determine the most effective method to facilitate and sustain the new initiatives.

The specific problem to be addressed is that leadership can hinder an organization's ability to make organizational changes to address shrinking revenue in small unit chain stores in

the automotive aftermarket such as Advance Auto, AutoZone, and O'Reilly Auto Parts in the Triad region of central North Carolina. This type of retailer was chosen because of the struggles this sector faces; competition from online firms such as Amazon is causing the sector to lose market share and revenue (Ramcharran, 2013). According to Kestenbaum (2017), retailers are being forced to close stores because of a failure to adapt to the demands of consumers. According to Vakola (2013), a retail organization's readiness to implement change is a predictor to continued viability.

This failure to change as consumers' demands change is direct result of a culture that does not embrace the fluidity to remain viable. Further, Chen and Yang (2012) posited that leadership style is critical to the overall effectiveness of the change initiative. Many retailers suffer a misalignment between leadership style and employee motivation (Bell & Bodie, 2012). Much of this misalignment is the result of managers that fail to include their direct reports in mutual discovery (Spector, 2013). This includes their failure to serve employees during the change process (Panaccio, Henderson, Liden, Wayne, & Cao, 2015). By not serving employees, leaders fail to fulfill Jesus Christ's mandate to lead through service (Blanchard & Hodges, 2005). Ultimately, leaders fail their employees in a myriad of ways increasing the risk of failure for the firm and its stakeholders.

Many types of leadership can coordinate changes to organizational structure (Spector, 2013). Servant leadership is particularly suited to motivating employees to take action to implement and sustain change initiatives (Greenleaf, 1977). Moreover, Christian servant leadership is well suited to the challenges of organizational change due to the attributes of the leader (Hardy, 1990).

## **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore the insights and perceptions of individuals that have experienced change to organizational structure in the automotive aftermarket. Specifically, the focus was on change led by Christian servant leaders in an effort to provide business leaders with strategies and processes that can be used to more effectively facilitate such changes. The focus of this research study was front line retail managers that had experienced structural changes to their respective organizations under the tutelage of Christian servant leaders. Their perceptions of Christian servant leadership will indicate the overall effectiveness of this style of leadership in facilitating structural change in an effort to sustain revenue (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The implications for such understanding can be greater loyalty of employees, greater performance of the firm, and more sustainable growth patterns for the organization (Clercq, Bouckennooghe, Raja, & Matsyborska, 2014).

## **Nature of the Study**

There are three primary approaches to research: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Wisdom & Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research seeks to gain an understanding of relationships or contexts that are difficult for researchers to delineate experimentally for any number of reasons (Stenbacka, 2001). Qualitative research explores the experiences of research participants (Stenbacka, 2001) versus finding a relationship between variables which tends to be the focus of studies that use a quantitative method (Bryman, 2016).

Further, qualitative research is well suited for areas where little is known about a topic or the subject is emergent in nature (Wisdom & Creswell, 2013). While much has been written about servant leadership, a formally structured research study is necessary to determine the efficacy of Christian servant leadership in facilitating organizational change (Patrnchak, 2015).

Additionally, qualitative research allows researchers to gain an understanding of subjects that would be difficult to study through quantitative methods due to practical reasons (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). Conversely, quantitative methods tend to be better suited for gaining further understanding of subjects where there is already a foundational understanding of qualitative research that has been performed (Ingham-Broomfield, 2014).

Quantitative research examines causal and correlational relationships between variables (Bowers, 2016). Further, quantitative research uses closed ended questions to produce quantifiable data that can be analyzed statistically (Vogt, 2006). Based on the need to ask open-ended questions and gain an understanding of the lived experiences of study participants, it was clear that quantitative research was not well suited to this study

Finally, mixed methods research combines elements of qualitative and quantitative methods (Bryman, 2016). Mixed methods research is useful in situations where neither qualitative nor quantitative is ideally suited to the task (Wisdom & Creswell, 2013). Caution must be exercised when choosing mixed methods as equal attention must be given to the qualitative and the quantitative portions; doing so has the potential to reduce the researcher's ability to properly explore the target phenomenon (Harrison, 2013). The intent in choosing a qualitative method lies in the desire to gain a rich, detailed understanding of the experiences with the selected phenomenon of study participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The qualitative method was chosen due to the desire to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of Christian servant leadership used during organizational change in the retail sector. The qualitative method allows for the researcher to gain a rich understanding of the perception of study participants (Lewis, 2015). Once this decision was made, attention turned to

the best qualitative method to use. The phenomenological design allows for researchers to gain an in depth understanding of the experiences of each study participant (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The unstructured nature of the responses provides the researcher with the true nature of each individual's lived experiences in dealing with the phenomenon (Tuohy, Cooney, Dowling, Murphy, & Sixsmith, 2013). Through the analysis of respondents' transcripts, the researcher is able to identify themes that are shared by multiple individuals (Tuohy et al., 2013). The phenomenological design yields results that offset nuances in respondent experiences that are unique to single individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Further, phenomenology is well suited to situations where the researcher cannot easily observe the phenomenon being studied as is the case with this study (Ivey, 2013).

Narrative design looks to record the story of a single individual (Gill, 2001). The experiences of the respondent are reported chronologically. However, since it is just one individual, there is the opportunity for the data gained to be less applicable to a larger population (Bruce, Beuthin, Shields, Molzahn, & Schick-Makaroff, 2016). Next, ethnography seeks to understand the experiences of a whole culture-sharing group as observed in the natural setting (Hoey, 2014). In order to gain a clear understanding of the studied subject, it is believed the stories of multiple individuals are needed. Also, it is believed participants in this study need not be of a single culture or classification. Further, it is possible to gain an understanding of participants' experiences without observing them in the course of their work (Saarela et al., 2013). It is for these three reasons that narrative and ethnography were not chosen

There were two additional designs of qualitative research that were not chosen for this study: grounded theory and case study. Grounded theory seeks to develop new theory from patterns that are recognized during the data analysis phase of the study, while grounded theory



relies on interviews similar to phenomenology, grounded theory requires a much larger sample (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The end result of grounded theory is a new theory is advanced. While this study could have used grounded theory due to the many similarities between it and phenomenology, the researcher did not have an interest in theory development at this time. Perhaps this dissertation could be continued at a later date by increasing the number of study participants so that a theory is advanced.

Finally, case study is used to perform an in-depth study of an event, program, or activity (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Using case study, the researcher explored a real life, bounded system called a case. Rather than be a singular method of data collection, case study can use multiple methods to source data. For instance, case study can use interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, and so forth (Baxter & Jack, 2008). While case study can be used to gain understanding about a group of individuals, the intent of this dissertation was to gain rich understanding of the perceptions and feelings of study participants. As such, grounded theory was not well suited for this study.

### **Research Questions**

This qualitative, phenomenological study explored the perceptions and lived experiences of front line store managers in the retail industry as related to their knowledge of Christian servant leadership. The following research questions guided this study: What style of leadership do front line retail managers utilize in the change process? Is Christian servant leadership superior to other forms of leadership in facilitating organizational change?

### **Conceptual Framework**

Scholars use the conceptual framework to better understand a phenomenon. The conceptual framework allows scholars the ability to clarify various elements of the research

problem (Bordage, 2009). In qualitative research, it is possible to have multiple conceptual frameworks that apply to a single problem (Green, 2014). Likewise, a single conceptual framework can be applied to multiple problems (Green, 2014). Scholars use theories to aid in understanding the effects of servant leadership (Page & Wong, 2010).

Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory, also known as the two-factor theory, has been chosen for this doctoral study as it pertains to the leader's ability to develop and maintain an atmosphere that is conducive to organizational change. The theory was developed by Frederick Herzberg, a psychologist that became renowned for his work in business management.

Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory explains there are two sets of factors that occur simultaneously for each employee that dictates the overall level of satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Gupta, Alamelupriya, & Sengupta, 2013). Herzberg posited motivation factors are responsible for job satisfaction and hygiene factors lead to dissatisfaction. This theory is important to leaders as overall satisfaction leads to increased productivity and organizational success (Seppala & Cameron, 2015).

As managers of human resources, leaders must understand the forces that enhance motivation while mitigating hygiene factors (Sankar, 2015). Per Robert Greenleaf (1977), servant leadership has the capacity to enhance intrinsic motivators, works to develop employees, and uses failures as learning experiences. In addition, servant leaders hold employees in higher regard, work to enhance job security, involve subordinates in decision making, and cause employees to feel a sense of accomplishment (Panaccio et al., 2015). Cross referencing the effects and methods of servant leadership with Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory reveals alignment.

Leaders must understand Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory (Ramoo, Abdullah, & Piaw, 2013). As leaders take measures to mitigate hygiene factors, employee morale and commitment increases. Further, as leaders take steps to increase employee motivation, employees begin to increase performance. It is through the combined results of mitigating hygiene factors and the enhancing motivational factor that retailers can expect to outperform their competition, remain capable of implementing change, and remain viable in the market.

Motivation factors are elements of the work culture such as the level of enjoyment employees receive from the work itself, recognition, ability to grow personally and professionally, personal worth, self-realization, and the level of autonomy employees enjoy (Gupta et al., 2013). Employee motivation can be enhanced by creating a culture where employees feel valued, have the ability to grow with the firm, and have input on how to perform his job. Herzberg found jobs performed out of necessity were simply movement. In contrast, job functions performed out of an inherent desire enhanced motivation (Sankar, 2015).

Hygiene factors are elements such as job security, salary, benefits, policies, supervision, technical problems, interpersonal relations, and the physical work environment (Gupta et al., 2013). In order to decrease worker dissatisfaction, leaders must mitigate hygiene factors; to optimize and mitigate risk relative to these hygiene factors, leaders must create a positive culture, pay reasonable wages, and ensure job security (Sankar, 2015). Herzberg posited it is necessary to eliminate dissatisfaction before attempting to improve employee satisfaction validating a hierarchy of employee needs (Ghazi, Shahzada, & Khan, 2013).

Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory was valid and applicable to this doctoral study because leaders must understand an environment that fosters job satisfaction does not guarantee employees will not become dissatisfied. Further, alleviating factors that lead to dissatisfaction is

not enough to lead to satisfied employees (Wilson, 2015). This is based on Herzberg's belief that satisfaction and dissatisfaction occur on different continua (Sankar, 2015).

Organizations must understand the best methods for creating a culture that supports success. It is through the development of this culture that employees become more effective. In this study, there will be clear correlations drawn between leadership style and overall effectiveness in driving necessary organization change (Graham, Ziegert, & Capitano, 2015). The focus of this study was on Christian servant leadership. This focus ultimately balances other leadership styles with an understanding of Christian servant leadership. The study was directed at automotive aftermarket organizations that required organizational change processes.

### **Definition of Terms**

Definitions are meant to improve clarity for the reader (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Walker, 2013).

*Change implementation:* Change implementation is a set of actions taken by the leader of an organization to cause strategic renewal and maintain outstanding performance or to improve performance. Often, change implementation is found to be necessary in order for the firm to remain viable (Spector, 2013).

*Leadership:* Leadership is the process of influencing a group of individuals to work together to achieve a set of objectives for the advancement of the organization. Modern leadership theory makes distinctions among various types of leadership methods. For example, current theory recognizes authentic leadership, servant leadership, and adaptive leadership (Northouse, 2016).

*Servant leadership:* Servant leadership is a type of leadership where the leader is a servant first. The process begins with the feeling that an individual has a desire to serve

followed by a decision to lead others. It is through this union that servants ensure others' most important needs are met (Greenleaf, 1977).

*Team:* A team is a small group of individuals that have complimentary skills that work together to achieve a common set of objectives. Typically, the skills possessed by any one member of the team are not sufficient to ensure success. However, when these skills are combined with and complemented by other team members, the team becomes more capable of achieving larger, more complex objectives (Guchait, Lei, & Tews, 2016).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

**Assumptions.** It is common for researchers to hold beliefs that cannot be verified through study and research. These beliefs are known as assumptions (Barbour, 2001). In phenomenological research, researchers develop assumptions about study participants and the phenomenon itself that can impact the ability to apply the information gained from the study to a broader population set (Ashworth, 1999). In phenomenological research, assumptions are important because the intent of the researcher is to report the lived experiences of the participants in their own words (Ashworth, 1999). In this study, there were two main assumptions addressed: participants have knowledge, insights, and notions regarding the studied phenomenon and the researcher's bias.

In order to mitigate assumptions, researchers must take action (Barbour, 2001). To address the assumption that participants would have knowledge of Christian servant leadership in the context of organizational change, the researcher used a purposive sample of individuals that reported experience with the target phenomenon. A purposive sample is necessary to ensure participants can contribute relevant insight on the studied phenomenon (Petty, Thompson, & Stew, 2012). Further, the researcher developed a set of attributes that each participant needed

prior to initial contact and inclusion in the study. This is known as criterion sampling and is found to be superior to other types of sampling (Bennot, Hannes, & Bilseen, 2016).

In effort to mitigate the effects of the any assumptions held by the researcher, bracketing was used. Bracketing is the process of setting aside preconceived notions, experiences, and biases so as to understand the experiences of study participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In order to bracket, the researcher wrote down their biases and experiences with the studied phenomenon. Rather than a one-time event, bracketing should be done at the beginning of the research period and prior to conducting each interview (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

Bracketing should be a continuous process that takes place throughout the research process. This is due to the cascading nature of qualitative research. Failure to recognize assumptions at one phase of the project can impact the outcome at subsequent phases. For example, if bracketing is ignored during an initial phase like developing research questions, there can be lasting effects on the interview and data analysis phases (Tufford & Newman, 2012). Ideally, preconceptions should be recognized and bracketed before the research study begins and monitored as the study progresses. Done correctly, bracketing has the ability to enhance data collection, findings, and analysis (Rolls & Relf, 2006).

The risk associated with assumptions is the results can be skewed. In many cases, assumptions can affect the results so much that the findings of the research bear little resemblance to the experiences of study participants (Bendersky & McGinn, 2010). When this occurs, the findings of the study become invalid. Worse yet, the results of a heavily skewed fail to be reliable.

**Limitations.** Limitations are weaknesses in the study are a direct result of the study design (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). For example, the design of the study, a qualitative,

phenomenological approach, used the researcher as the primary instrument. As such, the analysis of the interviews is subjective leading to the potential for errors (Moustakas, 1994). Subjective analysis affects the overall external validity of the research findings (Morrow, 2005). This study was limited to a sample of 20 adults in the United States that were single unit managers in the retail industry. Further, this study also was limited by the knowledge of participants, time in the industry, or experience with the change process. However, a screening process was employed to ensure participants had knowledge of the phenomenon and worked in the automotive aftermarket.

**Delimitations.** Delimitations are the boundaries set by the researcher for the study (McCaslin & Scott, 2003). This qualitative, phenomenological study used front line, single unit retail managers of automotive aftermarket stores that worked in the Triad area of central North Carolina with experience in organizational change that was facilitated by employing Christian servant leadership. In order to gain an understanding of Christian servant leadership, other forms of leadership were not included. Also, the studied only sought to understand Christian leadership in terms of organizational change. Further, this study used a qualitative, phenomenological design. There were no quantitative data used to corroborate the findings.

### **Significance of the Study**

**Reduction of gaps.** Previous researchers have concluded using processes such as shared diagnosis, where front line employees are involved in the process of discovering issues with the current state of the organization are beneficial in assisting leaders in change implementation (Hassin, 2010). Further research suggests employees resist change because of a lack of understanding of why change is necessary; in other words, employees resist being changed (Spector, 2013). Conversely, there is very little information that applies the concepts of

Christian servant leadership to organizational change in the retail sector (Patrnchak, 2015). The intent of this study was to determine to what extent Christian servant leadership could be employed to address the fact that leadership style can hinder an organization's efforts to implement organizational change.

**Implications for Biblical integration.** The Bible provides a strong mandate for man to serve the Father and his fellow man. "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10: 45, NIV). In John 13, Jesus washed the feet of His disciples. There is significance in such an act. In the time of Jesus, washing one's feet was a job performed by the lowliest of servants. When Jesus engaged in such work, it set an example for all Christians to follow. Regardless of position, there is no child of God that is not called to serve God and others for the advancement of the Kingdom (Aust, 1997).

On a fundamental level, man is called to serve the Kingdom and His creation (Keller & Alsdorf, 2012). However, it is not necessary for man to go into a particular field in order to serve God and his fellow man. "Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches" (1 Corinthians 7:17). As such, it is possible and commanded to serve God in the role that an individual currently performs. Further, serving others is an act of service to God. "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me'" (Matthew 25:40).

Leaders in business can serve their direct reports by employing Christian servant leadership. Through the service of employees, leaders can serve God and advance His Kingdom. Christians are called to be good ambassadors for the Father (Blanchard & Hodges, 2008). Further, being a Christian servant leader allows business to better fulfill God's intent. God



designed business to fulfill two primary functions: provide goods and service to society and provide an outlet for Christians to use and express their God given talents (Van Duzer, 2010).

**Relationship to field of study.** The efficacy of servant leadership is highly related to the leadership cognate. Moreover, understanding the overall effectiveness of servant leadership in times of organizational change is highly desirable to leaders that are seeking to find the best way through such times (Mauri, 2017). Servant leadership may be difficult for managers that do not have the inherent drive to serve their followers; it may be possible for other types of leaders to employ some of the concepts of servant leadership in an effort to ensure a greater chance of success for any business initiative (Greenleaf, 1977). Further, top corporate leaders that are looking to hire middle managers may want to hire individuals that display attributes consistent with servant leadership (Collins, 2001). As a further extrapolation of the concept of servant leadership, Christian servant leaders also exhibit these extremely desirable traits. However, it must be noted that Christian servant leadership is delineated from its more secular counterpart in the overall intent of the leader; Christian servant leaders seek to serve their followers due the desire to advance the Kingdom of God (Blanchard & Hodges, 2008).

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

A review of the literature is necessary to develop a basis for original research. Further, the literature review prevents the duplication of efforts ensuring research advances the field of study (Pautasso, 2013). The theme of the literature review should be progress keeping all research questions in mind. Further, researchers link all preliminary research to the problem statement (Pickering & Byrne, 2014). This doctoral study considered the following questions: What style of leadership do front line retail managers utilize in the change process? What level

of involvement are front line managers compelled to execute to mitigate managerial resistance in the change process?

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences, insights, and perceptions of individuals that experienced organizational change in the automotive aftermarket sector led by servant leaders in an effort to provide business leaders with strategies and processes that can be used to more effectively facilitate organizational change. This doctoral study included 20 face-to-face interviews with retail managers in the automotive aftermarket that have experience organizational change. Qualitative data analysis was used to identify themes. These themes were used to develop strategies that can be used by retail organizations to better facilitate future change initiatives.

The two main methods used to organize a literature review are chronological and thematic (Fink, 2014). This literature review is organized thematically. The following databases will be used to source literature: ProQuest, JSTOR, EBSCO, ABI/INFORM, and Emerald Management. In this literature review, the researcher has included information on subject matter found to be relevant to the studied phenomenon. The topics covered were as follows: Organizational Change, Corporate Culture, Leadership Styles, Spirituality in the Workplace, and Spiritual Leadership.

### **Organizational Change**

Organizational change occurs any time there is a new idea or process introduced to the organization. According to Vaill (1991), renowned researcher and foremost author on the subject of organizational change, there is only so much firms can do to account for external situations that have a profound effect on the organization. In fact, Vaill posited that almost everything is outside the control of managers in an organization. Rather than plan for every

scenario, firms must become proficient at dealing with what he refers to as permanent white water (Vaill, 1991). Vaill stated that firms must be good at riding the rapids of change. Often times there are several changes taking place simultaneously. Vaill explained that firms simply transition from one set of rapids to the next never getting out of the white water. He went on to state navigating the challenges of an unpredictable business environment is similar to guiding a canoe through the white water of an untamed river.

Peter Senge, another seminal author in the field of organizational change, states that many organizations spend too much time searching for the right leader causing many initiatives to remain unfulfilled (Senge, 1990). He states this search causes resistance among employees, further hampering efforts to move forward. Senge, a renowned author, professor, and authority on organizational change, posits that firms face opportunities and limitations. Senge continues by stating there are four challenges that firms face when implementing change. They are as follows: leadership must communicate the compelling argument for why change is necessary, there must be adequate time dedicated to change efforts, employees must be given help during the process, and as barriers are removed, there must be a concerted effort to ensure that new problems do not come up that hinder efforts (Senge, 1990).

Senge (1990) continued by stating that to excel in the marketplace, firms must be learning organizations. In order to accomplish this, organizations must have employees that continually seek to enhance their capabilities and capacities, embrace new methods of thinking, and have employees that continually learn (Senge, 1990). Senge posited that firms must be able to adapt quickly to the changing landscape of the market to be successful. In order to be a learning organization, leaders must be able to develop a firm that aligns with the desired direction and understand when the intent is different than the result.

In some firms, the change is more constant. However, in other firms, change is discontinuous. In the latter, change marks a significant event that influences the overall trajectory of the firm. For the purpose of this paper, the focus is on discontinuous change (Scher & Lewis, 2008). Discontinuous change is thought to take place in distinct phases. For example, Bergmann Lichtenstein (2000) found that organizational change took place in three steps: increased organizing, tension among various entities within the organization, and the newly formed configuration. Through the years, several models of organizational change have been developed. The more popular models will be explored in the coming sections. Regardless of the mode or model of change that a firm uses, servant leadership as a leadership style is superior to facilitating organizational change (Allen et al., 2016).

As will become evident in the coming pages, servant leadership is effective in facilitating organizational change (Patrnchak, 2015). This is because servant leaders naturally do many of the things that cause employees to abandon resistance and embrace change initiatives. Employees that work for servant leaders tend to be more dedicated to the organizational (Patrnchak, 2015). In addition, servant leaders are more likely to include employees in the diagnostic process (Patrnchak, 2015) ensuring a greater sense of understanding and commitment to the initiative (Spector, 2013).

**Lewin's three-step model.** Much of Lewin's work stemmed from his fundamental belief that human condition could only be improved through the resolution and mitigation of conflict. Lewin (1946) believed the key to the mitigation of conflict lied in teaching individuals thereby changing their preconceived ideologies and perceptions. While the Three-step Model is the main focus of this section, Lewin believed Field Theory, Group Dynamics, and Action Research were

equally important and supported the desire to implement change on any level; be it individual, group, organizational, or society (Burnes, 2004; Burnes & Cooke, 2013).

**Field Theory.** Field Theory works to understand the totality of group behavior within the field in which it takes place. Lewin (1946) posited the key to understanding a situation was to understand the present situation or status quo is held in place by a certain set of conditions or forces. Lewin continued by postulating that group behavior is a complex set of interactions that affect group structure and individual behavior. As such, individual behavior is a function of the field or group. Therefore, changes in behavior are a direct result of changes in forces that are present in the field. For Lewin's purpose, field was defined as "a totality of coexisting facts which are conceived of as mutually interdependent..." (Lewin, 1946, p. 240).

Lewin (1946) postulated the field was constantly changing but the rate of change varied when compared to other periods of time. This led to Lewin using the phrase "quasi-stationary equilibrium" to describe the fact that processes and behavior contain rhythm or pattern while fluctuating constantly due to changes in circumstance (Burnes & Cooke, 2013). Lewin believed through the identification and plotting of the strength of these forces, it was possible to understand why individuals, groups, and organizations behave as they do. Further, Lewin believed that once an understanding of the current forces present was gained, it was possible to determine which forces would need to be strengthened or diminished to induce the desired change (Burnes & Cooke, 2013).

Lewin (1946) alleged behavioral change took place slowly; however, in times of crisis, forces were capable of changing quickly rendering the status quo as no longer viable. In such cases, new patterns emerge giving way to a new quasi-stationary equilibrium rapidly created allowing the individual or organization to return to a new state of normalcy. Due to Field

Theory's potential to map forces present on multiple levels, it is the basis for other theories developed by Lewin. In fact, change theories developed by other researchers draw on Field Theory (Burnes, 2004).

**Group Dynamics.** Lewin (1946) pioneered research in the ability of a group to affect the behavior of its individual members. Lewin proceeded through his research with two fundamental questions. What is it about the nature and characteristics of a particular group which causes it to behave as it does to the forces which impinge on it? How can these forces be changed in order to elicit a more desirable form of behavior? (Burnes, 2004).

Lewin (1946) posited change initiatives should focus on group behavior rather than the behavior of individuals. The primary reason it is necessary to focus on group behavior is because the norms of the group constrain the behavior of individuals. In situations where individuals deviate from group norms, the group takes corrective action including eliminating non-compliant members (Hermann, 2015).

Group factors relevant to creating disequilibrium resulting in change are as follows: group norms, socialization processes, member roles, and interactions between members. Lewin (1946) realized simply understanding the dynamics of a group is not enough to facilitate change. For change to occur, Lewin believed group members needed to be involved and committed to such change initiatives (Hermann, 2015). It is this realization that gave rise to Action Research and the Three-step Model (Hermann, 2015).

**Action Research.** Action Research is a two-pronged process meant to assist organizations in answering three questions fundamental to the implementation of change. The questions are as follows: What is the present situation? What are the dangers? What shall we do? (Lewin, 1946, p. 201). Lewin posited successful action is based on the organizations ability to correctly

diagnose the situation, identify all possible solutions, and choose the most appropriate solution to the problem (Massa, Farneti, & Scappini, 2015).

Lewin (1946) explained while these steps are imperative to change implementation, there is also a need for what was termed “felt-need.” Felt-need is the internalized realization by group members that change is necessary. Lewin recognized that change is difficult when felt-need is low. In developing Action Research, Lewin built upon the ideals of Gestalt psychology. Gestalt psychology states change only occurs when individuals gain new understanding into the totality of the current situation (Massa et al., 2015). Lewin went on to suggest Action Research is a spiral set of steps where research leads to action, action leads to analysis, and analysis leads to further research (Burnes, 2004). Ultimately, for organizational change to be successful, there must be participation and collaboration by all group members that are affected by the necessary change (Massa et al., 2015).

***Three-step Model.*** Lewin’s Three-step Model or Force Field Analysis dates to 1947. Most consider this theory to be Lewin’s (1946) most substantial contribution to the field of organizational change. In contrast, Lewin did not intend for the Three-step Model to exist alone. Rather, it was Lewin’s intent for Field Theory, Group Dynamics, Action Research, and the Three-step Model to be used in conjunction with each other to function as a planned approach for change. In addition, Lewin never intended for these models to only apply to organizations; they can apply to any structural level: individual, group, and society (Lewin, 1946). The Three-step Model states firms go through three distinct phases as they implement organizational change: unfreeze, move, and refreeze.

In the first phase, unfreeze, firms determine the need for change or a problem with the status quo (Cummings, Bridgman, & Brown, 2015). Lewin (1946) stated the unfreeze phase

occurs when organizations destabilize the quasi-stationary equilibrium. This equilibrium is held in place by a complex set of forces. To cause a change to the equilibrium, firms must change the dynamics of the forces. Lewin posited it is only when this equilibrium is properly destabilized that current behavior is discarded. Lewin expected the unfreezing phase to be different depending on the scenario.

Later work on the Three-step model has premised that the unfreezing stage at any level must be recognized as a “profound psychological dynamic process” (Schein, 1996, p. 27). Unfreezing is a three-step process for an organization: an abandonment of the status quo, an induction of survival anxiety, and the creation of safety on a psychological level. Without creating safety, individuals involved in the change deny disconfirming information or seek to defend against the change in other ways; servant leadership provides employees with safety necessary to proceed with change as leaders provide employees with the support that is necessary to create a secure environment (Patrnchak, 2015). In such a case, there is no survival anxiety. Further, change fails to take place. The underlying belief is that individuals must feel safe from humiliation to be accept new information and abandon old behaviors (Cummings et al., 2015).

It must be noted that unfreezing is simply the phase that creates an inherent motivation to abandon the status quo. Firms must go through the actual change which determines the overall direction. Change could be any process that alters the current state of the organization: implementing new processes, integrating new technology, and restructuring (Swanson & Creed, 2013). Change is a very complex process. Lewin (1946) posited leaders need to recognize this fact and evaluate all available options on a trial and error basis; such an approach involves learning as advanced by Action Research. Lewin advocated for such an iterative process of research, action, research for all change initiatives. This seemingly repetitive process is found to



be necessary to move from less desirable to more desirable behaviors (Wojciechowski, Murphy, Pearsall, & French, 2016).

Finally, refreezing seeks to stabilize the newly developed behaviors creating a new quasi-stationary equilibrium (Swanson & Creed, 2013). Without this step, the new behaviors are not safe from regression. Rather than creating a new equilibrium, the organization will revert to former status quo. In such situations, the organization once again becomes vulnerable to the issues that made change necessary to begin with. Future change initiatives will become more difficult to facilitate due to individuals developing an inherent skepticism (Wojciechowski et al., 2016).

For new behaviors to lead to a new stationary equilibrium, they must be compatible with other elements of the organization. This is the reason change implementation is a group activity where individuals that will be affected by the change must be involved and actively participate. Failure to include all group members will lead to discomfort within the excluded individuals. Further, group dynamics, organizational culture, policies, norms, and practices must be transformed to cause changes to be retained (Bartunek & Woodman, 2015).

Lewin (1946) posited much of the cause for failure of change initiatives could be attributed to firms that failed to properly embrace the intent and reality of one or more phases. For example, failure could be caused by firms that failed to properly unfreeze; in such a scenario, firms may fail to create an understanding among employees that the current situation is no longer acceptable. Lewin's model groups forces by whether they promote change or resist change. For change to take effect, forces promoting it must be greater than those which create resistance (Swanson & Creed, 2013).

**The Beckhard-Harris Change Model.** Beckhard and Harris posited there are finite conditions that are necessary for change to take place. The model consists of four separate phases that firms must progress through to realize organizational change. The steps are as follows: dissatisfaction with the current state, a vision for the desired future state, taking the first steps to make the vision a reality, and account for resistance to change. The phases of the Beckhard-Harris Change Model led to the development of a formula that can be used to determine the likelihood that change will take place:  $D \times V \times F > R$ . This formula states the product of Dissatisfaction, Vision, and First steps must be greater than Resistance (Bradutanu, 2012).

***Dissatisfaction.*** Beckhard and Harris posited that all change must begin with some level of dissatisfaction with the current state. Without such dissatisfaction, there is simply nothing to cause an organization to consider alternate states (Bradutanu, 2012). In general terms, the discomfort caused by the current state must be greater than the uncertainty that is inherent when change occurs. In addition to discomfort, members of the organization must have a willingness to search for and consider alternatives. It must be noted leaders should understand the need for change may not be apparent to others within the organization. In such cases, a phenomenon referred to as the Marathon Effect has developed.

While working to create dissatisfaction, it must be recognized leaders within in the organization tend to have a wealth of tools and information that is not available to front line employees. With this information, leaders are normally the first ones to understand the need for change. Often, they design a change plan and pass instructions down to employees at lower positions in the hierarchy. Such a scenario is met with less than stellar results. This is because front line employees had no idea of the need for change (Bridges & Mitchell, 2000).

This phenomenon is known as the Marathon Effect. Imagine a large marathon with thousands of runners. When the starting gun goes off, runners near the back of the pack may start the race 30 minutes after the front runners do. It is not uncommon for those runners at the back of the pack to not even hear the starting gun. Without such information, these runners can lack the excitement that is associated with the start of the event. The runners at the back of the pack are synonymous with front line employees; during a change initiative; front line employees may not even hear the starting gun. In fact, this phenomenon is exacerbated as additional layers are added to the hierarchy (Bridges & Mitchell, 2000).

In an effort to mitigate the marathon effect, leaders must include all stakeholders in the process of analysis. Further, stakeholders must be included in the planning phase of a change initiatives. Including these individuals will assist them with understanding the need for change. In addition, front line employees will better understand their role during organizational change (Bridges & Mitchell, 2000). Servant leaders naturally involve their employees in the initial stages of the change initiative, a process known as shared diagnosis (Patrnchak, 2015). This is because organizations led by servant leaders involve manager-employee relations built on mutual trust and respect.

***Vision.*** Dissatisfaction without a clear path forward causes frustration, anger, and apathy. This is because such a situation can cause employees to feel as if there are no options. Group members must determine where they want to go to and what they want to achieve. Once the vision is developed, it must be communicated throughout the organization in such a manner that all employees involved understand what must happen and why (Nasir, Abbas, & Zafar, 2014).

***First steps.*** When organizations have dissatisfaction and a vision, the logical next step is to take action to mitigate the dissatisfaction and achieve the vision. Yet, it is all too common for

organizations to fail to act. Remaining inactive can also lead to the same frustration and despair that not having a vision leads to. In fact, a failure to act can be worse because employees realize that leaders are aware of the unacceptable nature of the status quo; in such case, employees become apathetic and cynical causing change initiatives to be even more difficult when action is finally taken (Bradutanu, 2012).

Action should begin by engaging employees and giving them the opportunity to describe their perception with the status quo. In addition, employees should be given an opportunity to express their concerns with the vision that leaders have developed. Front line employees have a different perspective; they are the ones that deliver goods and services the organization creates. As such, they may have information not available in the reports leaders use. Engaging employees in the process of shaping the vision and designing the action plans ensures the change initiative has the best chance of success (Nasir et al., 2014).

**Resistance.** Resistance to change is a reality for any change initiative. Since resistance must be less than the product of dissatisfaction, vision, and first steps, leaders need to understand the various sources of resistance; understanding what causes resistance will allow leaders to gauge the current level of resistance and take steps to mitigate the same (Bradutanu, 2012). There are many reasons employees resist change. The most common are as follows: they may lose something of value, lack of trust in leadership, a lack of knowledge about the proposed change, fear of not having a position in the new organization, believe change is wrong for the organization, and a lack of time to properly implement change. Servant leaders are very good at mitigating resistance since there is an overarching sense of trust that permeates the organization (Allen et al., 2016).

Many of the causes of resistance can be mitigated by developing employees' trust. Beyond trust, leaders must include employees in the various stages of planning and implementation. By including employees, leaders can begin to understand the sources of concern for employees. The result of these interactions is the overall potential of a successful change plan is increased (Nasir et al., 2014).

The Beckhard-Harris Change Plan can be originated from an examination of various financial reports that show change is necessary for survival. Further, such an approach tends to promote long range planning. In addition, this model requires support from top managers while allowing front line employees to contribute to the transition through incremental changes that take place over time. While there is flexibility as to the order of the steps, each step is necessary for the success of this plan (Caldwell, 2003).

**Thurley's Change Model.** Thurley's change model takes a different approach to change than the two models previously described. Thurley offered five methods that could be used to manage change: directive, bargained, hearts and minds, analytical, and action-based (Lockitt, 2004). Each strategy has its advantages and is applicable in different circumstances. Like the other models described thus far, leadership must recognize the need for change. Rather than stand alone, Thurley intended for leadership to be able to pull strategies from each method as the situation dictates (Lockitt, 2004). It is through the use of all five strategies that Thurley proposed his change model gave leaders the greatest flexibility. Leaders must have an understanding of all five models allowing the situation to determine the course of action (Lockitt, 2004).

**Directive.** The directive approach is found to be useful in situations where managers must respond quickly, such as in crisis situations. Managers determine the best course of action and proceed without input from others within the organization. Using this approach, managers take

action based on their formal authority. However, the views and feelings of other employees are ignored (Martins, 2009).

***Bargained.*** The bargained approach works to develop an open dialogue between leaders and employees. This approach recognizes employees are stakeholders of the firm and they have a right to express their opinions about situations that take place. In times of change, the bargained approach seeks to gain a consensus on the best plan forward before taking actions (Martins, 2009). The bargained approach closely aligns to the manner in which servant leaders seek to facilitate organizational change (Allen et al., 2016). Servant leaders look for input from employees rather than make unilateral decisions. The outcome is a more effective process that causes the changes that are implemented to become the new normal state of the firm.

***Hearts and minds.*** The hearts and minds approach considers the feeling of employees. However, this approach does not consider any input from employees as to the best path forward. The basis of the hearts and minds approach is that managers actively seek to develop a relationship with their employees. The end result is commitment on the part of the employee. While this approach can be successful in organizational change, it does take time to develop the types of relationships necessary for success (Lockitt, 2004).

***Analytical.*** The analytical approach begins with an analysis of the current state. From there, managers can devise a plan of action for the change process. Further, managers must determine objectives and make an approximation of the results of the desired future state (Martins, 2009).

***Action-based.*** The action-based approach builds on the analytical approach in terms of the steps managers must take to drive change. However, the action-based approach recognizes there are changes that front-line employees must make within themselves to further ensure

change initiatives are successful. The action-based approach requires managers to support the necessary changes in employees through training, incentives, and recruiting (Lockett, 2004).

**Kotter's Model of Change.** Kotter's model is designed to be used in the strategic level of the organization to change the vision. It is through the change in vision that transformation occurs. Kotter (2012) posited change is necessary to allow organizations to develop solutions and respond to changes in the market place. He felt firms that failed to change as necessitated by the market were destined for failure or takeover. In that respect, Kotter viewed change as fundamentally necessary for survival. In order for firms to proceed through effective organizational change, Kotter designed an eight-step process. Each of the eight steps are designed to be implemented sequentially (Calegari, Sibley, & Turner, 2015).

Kotter suggested the first step in facilitating change is the development of a sense of urgency. A sense of urgency requires a subset of employees in the firm to recognize the current situation is not desirable. While creating a sense of urgency may sound easy, Kotter advised leaders to be cautious because 50% of all the firms that Kotter studied failed to properly implement step one ultimately leading to the change initiative failing prior to its start. Kotter found that 75% of the organization's managers needed to believe change was necessary before the effort would be successful (Pollack & Pollack, 2015).

Step two in the process is to have managers work closely with individuals that are found to be most resistant to change by assembling a group of individuals known as guiding coalition (Pollack & Pollack, 2015). The goal is to have 100% of managers backing the change effort because leaders disseminate the sense of urgency to front line employees. While the change effort can be sustained by a guiding coalition that is relatively small in the beginning, it must grow over time for step two to be successful (Pollack & Pollack, 2015).

In step three, a vision should be developed of strategies that can be used to accelerate the change. The vision is meant to clarify the direction of the firm's change initiative. In addition, the vision determines the overall final state of the organization (Caegari et al., 2015). To ensure success, leaders must construct a vision that is easy to communicate to others within the firm. Without a coherent vision, efforts to initiate change degrade into a continual list of incompatible projects that cause the firm to go in the wrong direction. In some cases, a lack of vision can cause change efforts to leave the firm worse off than it was in the beginning (Caegari et al., 2015).

In step four, leaders and managers should communicate the vision allowing employees to understand change is necessary. Leaders must use all forms of communication. It is during the communication phase the need for a large guiding coalition becomes evident. Firms need to continually repeat the vision offering explanation as why the move is necessary (Farkas, 2013). Further, leaders must be prepared to answer questions as organizational change will be a stressful time for employees. Leader must understand the need to lead by example as employees that are skeptical will look to management for guidance; any doubt displayed by managers will foster resistance (Farkas, 2013).

Step five is the time when leaders should empower employees to take action. During this time, leaders must take steps to remove obstacles that will impede change. In addition, the firm must allocate resources such a budget, time, and support (Farkas, 2013). Further, it is during this period when leaders should see additional employees getting involved; the more employees the firm can involve in their change efforts, the more likely the initiative is to succeed (Farkas, 2013).



Continuing on, step six involves managers bringing attention to short term wins. Organizational change is a long process. For employees to remain excited, they must be made aware of the status of the process and attention should be brought to success stories of the change. Properly envisioned processes are designed to include short term goals causing the firm to remain focused (Calegari et al., 2015). When leaders fail to build in these short-term goals, the process is likely to fail due to losing momentum. Short-term goals are also important to provide managers with milestones to compare to benchmarks or budgets. When managers determine there are missed short-term goals, they are better positioned to apply corrections (Farkas, 2013).

In step seven, many firms determine the change initiative is complete and successful. Kotter warns against such action. Rather, Kotter suggested firms must consolidate gains and continue along the path of change; this is because the changes that have taken place thus far are not part of the culture of the firm (Jones-Schenk, 2017). When managers stop at step seven, the changes made are likely to revert. Kotter cautioned true organizational change can take years to accomplish; even for the best managed firms (Jones-Schenk, 2017).

Finally, in step eight leaders nurture the change causing the new state to become permanent. Leaders work to ensure the change becomes embedded in the culture of the firm (Appelbaum, Habashy, Malo, & Shafiq, 2012). Adapting and facilitating a new culture involves hiring employees that are predisposed to carrying out the new culture and developing current employees to embrace the new cultural. Kotter posited change is assisted by demonstrating the intended future state is critical to the overall success of the firm (Appelbaum et al., 2012).

## Corporate Culture

Corporate culture is relevant to this study because the culture of the organization has a direct impact on its ability to design, implement, and sustain organizational change (Naqshbandi, Kaur, & Ma, 2015). In fact, a corporate culture that supports change can be the difference between success and failure of the initiative. In order to ensure success in the implementation of change, employees must experience job satisfaction (Tsai, 2011). When employees are satisfied and secure in their employment, they are more committed to the organization and are more productive.

**Definition of corporate culture.** In order to provide a better understanding of the effect of corporate, it is necessary to give a concrete definition of the concept. While the concept of corporate culture has been defined in many ways, a highly accepted definition is a basic system of assumptions and beliefs that guide a group as they deal with external issues and internal negotiations (Ortega-Parra & Sastre-Castillo, 2013). This system is learned by employees and passed on as individuals join the group. Often times, the culture of the corporation can be passed on to new members with little spoken instruction. In corporations that seek to develop or impact their culture, individuals are hired based on perceived predisposition to aligning with the desired cultural aspects (Ortega-Parra & Sastre-Castillo, 2013).

This definition of corporate culture builds on five cultural values. These values are as follows: employee development, customer orientation, harmony, innovation, and social obligation (Tsui, Wang, & Zin, 2006). Values are grouped into external adaptation and internal integration. Internal integration is comprised of harmony and employee development. The remaining three aspects, customer orientation, innovation, and social responsibility are the external adaptations of the firm. When gauging the culture of a firm, researchers place each of the five

aspects of corporate culture on a continuum (Tsui et al., 2006). Culture is rated from highly integrative culture or highest focus on culture to hierarchy focus or least focus on culture.

Continuing with this definition, corporate culture exists on three levels. The most visible of the levels, behavior and artifacts, is easy to view. This is the level that contains behavior and the transparent aspects of culture (Colon-Aguirre, 2015). For example, it is this level that contains elements of culture such as dress code, decorum, and work layout. While these elements are visible, they can still be difficult to understand.

The next level of culture contains values (Colon-Aguirre, 2015). While values are not visible, their existence both causes and impacts behaviors that are displayed within the firm. Values can be divided into two categories: operating and stated. Behavior is most notably impacted by stated values (Bourne & Jenkins, 2013). Stated values are those in which the firm communicates to its members. In order for stated values to be most effective, their use must be evident through observation. For corporate culture to be most impactful, employees must perceive that stated values and observed norms align. In organizations where the two states are not the same, culture is quickly undermined (Bourne & Jenkins, 2013).

Finally, the last level of culture includes the assumptions and beliefs held by employees (Colon-Aguirre, 2015). This level of corporate culture is the deepest. It is believed values impact and result in beliefs and assumptions. Once ingrained, the fundamental beliefs are difficult to change. They are passed on to new employees, most commonly in an unspoken fashion. Even when managers hire individuals that are predisposed to the desired culture, negative assumptions and beliefs can cause the individual to adhere to the culture already in place (Colon-Aguirre, 2015). In order to gain a thorough understanding of the culture that exists, one must gain an understanding of this level. Gaining an understanding of assumptions and

beliefs can be difficult as many individuals are incapable of articulating the nature of their beliefs.

**Empowerment.** Empowerment is the process of passing authority down the corporate hierarchy (Joo, Lim, & Kim, 2016). Empowerment during organizational change is important as it develops immediate buy in amongst front line employees that are charged with the task of implementing changes (Chang, 2016). For empowerment to take place, managers must ensure that front line employees have the information necessary to make correct decisions. The effects of empowerment are improved decision making by employees at all level of the firm, enhanced problem-solving capabilities, higher output, lower absenteeism, and greater organizational commitment. All of these effects translate into increased organizational effectiveness (Joo et al., 2016). Empowering employees is a hall mark of firms with positive cultures.

**Team orientation.** In organizations that support team orientation, employees are mutually accountable for the achievement of common goals. However, it is not enough for firms to simply hold employees accountable for the realization of group projects. In highly team-oriented cultures, employees develop an inherent sense of mutual accountability (Rahman, Rehman, Imran, & Aslam, 2017). Team orientation enhances the flow of knowledge from team to individual. The flow of knowledge plays a vital role in employee development. Cultural norms are more easily communicated to employees throughout the firm. Lastly, team orientation helps firms implement and maintain change (Mustafa, Glavee-Geo, & Rice, 2017).

In order to be effective, team members must be able to cooperate, communicate, and resolve conflicts as they arise. Doing so serves to increase the productivity of the team leading to increased innovation and productivity (Rahman et al., 2017). To enhance the overall effectiveness of teams, managers should include key team members in the process of shared

diagnosis. Inclusion in the decision-making process has been found to be positively correlated to the rate at which a firm is able to change (Li, Liu, Han, & Zhang, 2016). Further, teams that include a significant presence of diversity and whose members' talents complement each other have been found to be more productive and successful.

**Adaptability.** Adaptability is important to any organization. Firms must be capable of taking influences of the operational environment and translating them into a valid response (Bowles & Arnup, 2016). Adaptability is another element of the corporate culture that can see if a firm is able to properly react or if it is so rigid that little change occurs even when faced with the greatest adversity. Adaptable organizations base decisions on an analysis of the market, take risks, and learn from their mistakes (Bowles & Arnup, 2016). It is through this process that change takes place. More importantly, change takes place within adaptable organizations on a predictable, controlled basis.

Further, adaptable organizations develop a system of norms that provides values to its customers. This is accomplished through the ability to receive and interpret information. Once information is sourced, it must be translated thorough analysis into an internal process that increases the organization's propensity to not only survive, but to grow (Bowles & Arnup, 2016). The most adaptable firms realize improved sales and growth in market share. It should be noted that adaptable firms change often; however, they are aware caution must be exercised not to abandon a new initiative before it can become fruitful. In other words, adaptable firms do not just change often, they change better than firms that do not have a similar culture that embraces adaptability.

**Creating change.** Intuitively defined, creating change refers to an organization's ability to create ways to address a changing business climate. In order to be successful, firms must have

the ability to analyze the market, react quickly as trends change, and predict future changes (Robertson, 2015). While leaders may understand the need for organizational change, it remains one of the least understood processes. This misstep by leaders is a direct result of their failure to properly communicate change messages to front line employees. The message conveyed by leaders sets the tone for change and assists in understanding the temperament of employees as initiatives are implemented (Hurst & Hurst, 2016). Leaders' messages become more important as employees begin to quantify how the perceived outcomes will affect them; both positively and negatively. When employees believe change is unfair or they perceive mistreatment, resistance to the change proposal results.

In order for change initiatives to be successful, employees must support change. While this support for change may seem off topic when discussing corporate culture, it must be understood that it is the culture that undergirds any initiative that is taken on, especially organizational change (Hurst & Hurst, 2016). Leaders create a culture that backs change by including direct reports and front-line employees in the discovery of new ways to succeed. Further, managers must create and communicate the vision for a desired future state. Finally, leadership must display a positive attitude towards the change process and the desired future state. Failure to fully commit to each step undermines the development of a culture that can facilitate organizational change, making any future attempts less likely to be successful.

**Organizational learning.** Organizational learning takes place when the firm receives a signal from the market and takes action to capitalize on new opportunities and address new threats. A culture that supports organizational learning encourages innovation while developing new capabilities (Imran, Ilyas, Aslam, & Ubaid-Ur-Rahman, 2016). There is a clear positive correlation between successful organizational change and organizational learning. At the

pinnacle of organizational learning, generative learning occurs when firms challenge long-held notions about corporate mission, capabilities, and strategy (Chiva & Habib, 2015). Generative learning has become a hallmark for firms that consistently implement and undergo organizational change as no opportunity is left unexplored.

Organizational learning also serves to underpin the drive for employee development programs. Programs such as these are used to develop new skill sets necessary to drive innovation and organizational change (Imran et al., 2016). When firms seek to implement change initiatives, they can choose to hire employees with the skills necessary to carry out organizational change, develop the necessary skills internally through training initiatives, or a combination of the two. Firms that choose to develop the necessary skills internally are better received culturally by their employees and within the marketplace. This is likely due to the statement that such a level of commitment makes to employees (Davis, 2015).

In addition, learning introduces new ideas, develops the ability to comprehend new processes, and enhances the abilities of the firm to recognize new opportunities (Davis, 2015). Said another way, organizational learning and employee development programs encourage and support innovation. However, it all starts with the implementation of a culture that supports employees at all levels of the hierarchy to engage in a cycle of learn, change, and repeat. Due to this, firms are beginning to see organizational learning in a new light with greater capacity to ensure the overall continued viability of the entire organization.

**Organizational performance.** Organizational performance is a broad concept comprised of productivity, consistency, and quality (Oncioiu, Stanciu, Boteanu, & Bîlcan, 2017). Performance measures include such elements of operation like results, behavior, skills, and performance management. Corporate culture has the ability to promote organizational

performance, enhance employee satisfaction, and provide a known direction when facing adversity (Kotter, 2012). When incongruence exists with internal and external stakeholders, organizational effectiveness will decline. Culture serves to combat this decline as employees have an understanding of norms and expectations. In addition, culture promotes commitment to philosophy and values leading to a concerted effort to work towards the realization of common goals. Next, corporate culture serves to control behaviors leading to desired results. Finally, many aspects of positive corporate culture are predisposed to higher levels of performance (Oncioiu et al., 2017).

### **Leadership Styles**

Various leadership styles can affect the overall level of success of organizational change. In many organizations, the leader sets the tone and his methods can cause a response from other employees in the firm. Depending upon position, a leader's tone has the ability to permeate throughout the organization due to a series of reactions that travel down the hierarchy (Graham et al., 2015). Effective leadership is less about being the boss of people and more about becoming a colleague. The value of such an approach is that leaders can facilitate conversation between employees leading to the desired outcome (Block, 2013). The styles that were examined were as follows: autocratic, transformational, transactional, laissez-faire, and servant.

**Autocratic leaders.** Autocratic leaders are characterized by reserving control of the organization while seeking almost no input from other employees within the firm or group. Often times, decisions made by autocrats are made based on the leader's own thoughts, feelings, positions, or ideas. In organizations led by autocratic leaders, there is very little information that rises through the chain of command to alert the leader of situations known by front line employees and low-level managers. Some autocratic leaders may maintain a small number of



trusted advisors and elicit input on select bases. This style of leadership tends to be effective in situations where decisions must be made quickly. Business owners or managers that must ensure consistency tend to use this leadership style. In order to disseminate their orders and decisions, autocrats employ rigid policies and procedures (De Hoogh, Greer, & Hartog, 2015).

Autocratic leaders can induce great stress for their employees. Rather than complete projects to the best outcomes, employees tend to take measures that avoid disciplinary action taken by managers. Employees can be reluctant to speak up. Often times, turnover increases (De Hoogh et al., 2015). In addition, vacant positions can be difficult to fill as potential recruits learn of how managers within the firm behave. This negative reputation can be even more apparent today due to the ease of sharing information and experience via the Internet and social media. Employees may begin discussing their negative experiences in private further exacerbating the negativity or hostile work environment. In many cases, the outcome of autocratic leadership can be an increase in operating costs (De Hoogh et al., 2015).

Autocratic leadership can also be harmful in times when organizational change is necessary. Autocrats tend to not utilize processes such as shared diagnosis (Overstreet et al., 2014). Ultimately, autocrats demand change rather than explain the reasons behind such changes. Employees can resent such tactics resorting to resisting new methods and processes. In extreme cases, employees may even resort to sabotage to prevent organizational change (Overstreet et al., 2014).

**Transformational leaders.** Transformational leaders are fundamentally different from autocrats. Using transformational leadership, managers partner with subordinates to identify necessary changes within the firms. These leaders look to develop and execute on a vision that is shared among members of the group at all levels of the organizational hierarchy (Gillam, 2016).

The desire of these leaders is for the firm to achieve more than quantifiable results; they seek to compel employees to greatness on a personal level. These leaders look to better motivation, job performance, and esprit de corps. Managers that use this type of leadership are constantly looking for new ways to improve the firm in an effort to achieve a better future for the organization and all that depend on its success (Gillam, 2016).

Transformational leaders seek to become role models to their subordinates by encouraging and rewarding followers that take ownership of their duties. These types of leaders seek to develop an understanding of the personalities, strengths, and weaknesses of followers (De Oliveira Rodrigues & Ferreira, 2015). This type of understanding is sought to align employees with the tasks they are most likely to find enjoyable while also being successful. In situations where there is not an ideal fit, transformational leaders tend to attempt to compensate for the shortcomings of followers (De Oliveira Rodrigues & Ferreira, 2015).

Transformational leaders encourage partnerships between employees at all levels of the firm. As such, the organizational behavior tends to be very positive. In businesses operated by transformational leaders, results are achieved as a byproduct of the culture (De Oliveira Rodrigues & Ferreira, 2015). In such situations, employees are encouraged to broaden their functional influence past their defined job description. Failure is seen as a part of business and an opportunity for employee growth rather than an absolute negative. Transformational leaders tend to be successful in the implementation of organizational change. This is because these leaders employ shared diagnosis and encourage collaboration. Employees tend to be compelled to take risks leading to additional opportunities (De Oliveira Rodrigues & Ferreira, 2015).

**Transactional leaders.** Transactional leadership is a management style that focuses on the supervision of employees. Such leaders tend to rely on organization and demand high levels of compliance from followers in an effort to drive performance of the firm. Transactional leaders look to develop increased levels of stability causing the business to remain largely unchanged for extended periods of time (De Oliveira Rodrigues & Ferreira, 2015). Managers that use this type of leadership style look to performance reports to find areas that deviate from current strategy. Desired behaviors are rewarded while counterproductive behaviors are punished. Transactional leaders tend to perform well in a crisis situation. In addition, these leaders function well during the implementation and execution of special projects when adherence and execution are paramount (De Oliveira Rodrigues & Ferreira, 2015).

The result of transactional leadership is that employees tend to become extremely loyal to the firm. In addition, these leaders develop employees that are obedient as they seek reward rather than retribution (Taylor, Psocka, & Legree, 2015). This behavior is different from what is seen in response to autocratic leaders where followers are literally fearful of punishment. The difference is largely due to transactional leaders doling out rewards when they are found to be warranted. Even so, employees can become discouraged when there are multiple compliance issues or when other employees are terminated (Taylor et al., 2015).

During the more difficult times, there can be an “us against them” mentality developed by employees. This attitude can be difficult to expel once it develops even when the firm returns to more favorable conditions due in part to a perceived lack of support from managers (De Oliveira Rodrigues & Ferreira, 2015). In situations where change is necessary, transactional leaders tend to be less successful than other types of leaders. Transactional leaders work well at

maintaining the status quo. These leaders can lack the creativity needed to find innovative solutions to challenges facing the firm (Pieterse, van Knippenberg, Schippers, & Stam, 2010).

**Laissez-Faire leaders.** Laissez-faire leadership is a style of leadership that advocates managers take a hands-off approach. Rather, group members and employees make decisions for themselves. This type of leadership is the extreme case of autonomy. Laissez-faire leaders believe people excel when left alone. They attempt to manage employees through various covert means. The overwhelming attitude is one of do as you wish as long as the job gets done. Successful laissez-faire leaders rely on assembling a strong team and then stay out of their way (Buch, Martinsen, & Kuvaas, 2015). They depend on the team to know when additional guidance is necessary and reach out to the leader for input. There are situations where laissez-faire leadership is successful; in situations where firms are in the incubator phase or where innovation and creativity is critical. However, research suggests laissez-faire leadership is marked by consistently low productivity when used in inappropriate settings (Buch et al., 2015).

Laissez-faire leadership tends to fail to support, train, and motivate people that are in the developmental stages of their jobs or careers. In addition, for groups and teams, there can be a reduced sense of urgency to complete tasks and a tendency to develop poor time management skills (Buch et al., 2015). Further, there tends to be a lack of accountability leading to a failure to achieve the intended results. In situations where there is a mismatch, laissez-faire leaders can leave employees feeling as if there is little reason to strive for success. While employees may find they like the additional freedom, it can be too much of a good thing for many (Buch et al., 2015). When tasked with the demands of organizational change, laissez-faire leaders fail to convey the need to proceed with the steps necessary to succeed. This can go far beyond involving employees in the process of identifying new opportunities and determining the

problems with the status quo. Laissez-faire leaders tend to not make corrections (Skogstad, Hetland, Glaso, & Einarsen, 2014)

**Servant leaders.** Servant leadership is one of the newer models of leadership theory when considered in a purely secular fashion. Credited as the product of Robert Greenleaf, servant leadership is marked by leaders that serve those that report to them. In theory, these leaders invert the organizational hierarchy resulting in front line employees being at the top of the firm (Bambale, 2014). Managers that are Christian servant leaders share their power and authority with their employees. These leaders support and encourage employees to reach their full potential providing direction along the way. Employees are included in discussions about decisions facing the firm. They are encouraged to take an individual leadership role and work to guide peers when appropriate (Bambale, 2014).

Servant leadership also exists in the guidance of Jesus during His time among man. Jesus used servant leadership as a means to teach Christian principles and give rise to disciples that would continue His teachings after He was gone. Jesus declared “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45, ESV). In John 13, Jesus went as far as washing the feet of His disciples; this is an important act as washing one’s feet was normally a task reserved for the lowest of all servants of the home. Quite literally, this scene states the Son of God is willing to do anything to support His Father’s creation. Why should mere men believe they are too righteous to follow suit?

Simply put, the behavior displayed by Jesus is indicative of God’s original design for the creation to serve the Creator. In other words, man is meant to serve. It only makes sense this behavior should transcend into one’s work environment (Duby, 2009). Christian servant leaders are different from their secular counterparts in motivation. While the outcome of both servant

leaders and Christian servant leaders is similar, Christian servant leaders are motivated by an innate desire to serve God and advance His Kingdom (Blanchard & Hodges, 2005). While the service to one's fellow man is important, it is secondary to the inclination to serve God. In fact, it is through the service to man that leaders are able to serve the Father (Blanchard & Hodges, 2005).

Servant leadership is associated with employees that feel valued by their manager and the organization as a whole. They tend to be very loyal and speak highly of the firm. Employees and managers relate to one another on the basis of mutual trust. Managers typically provide employees with sufficient resources and employees respond by achieving above average results. In firms that practice servant leadership, turnover tends to be lower resulting in lower cost and employees that develop into experts over time. Customers report increased satisfaction when dealing with these firms and employees. The focus of the firm is on the future as many function as extremely sustainable entities; even in times of market instability (Bambale, 2014). In times when organizational change is necessary, servant leaders tend to excel. These leaders lead through a partnership of mutual trust to motivate employees to action. Servant leaders rarely feel compelled to resort to formal authority to persuade individuals to take action. The relationship and culture created by servant leaders makes an ideal atmosphere for supporting organizational change. In fact, the case could be made that servant leaders create the optimal environment to support change (Savage-Austin & Honeycutt, 2011).

### **Spirituality in the Workplace**

In the last 20 years, there has been a shift in the overall attitude towards spirituality in the workplace. This shift has occurred as part of a larger paradigm shift that has seen firms move from purely economic forces to encompassing a concern for the welfare, quality of life, and

spirituality of employees (Wang & Han, 2016). Firms have moved steadily from transactional to transformational working to balance this ever-changing reality with a need for profits. Many modern firms are in the process of casting aside self-interest for a more socially acceptable agenda of stewardship.

In addition to this shift in paradigm, there has been an overarching gravitation towards organizations that assist employees with managing the competing demands of work, family, school, and so forth (Wang & Han, 2016). Much of this is facilitated by firms that offer flexible work arrangements such as flexible schedules and telecommuting. In addition, firms have moved towards empowering employees in an effort to increase involvement. Organizations have begun to recognize they can make work more enriching and fulfilling without sacrificing profits. In addition, organizations are finding that creating a culture such as this allows change initiatives to be more successful as there is greater commitment from employees (Albuquerque, Cunha, Martins, & Sá, 2014).

This move towards spirituality breaks the long-regarded norm of purely secular places of employment (Wang & Han, 2016). Rather, employees are encouraged to form informal groups to study the Bible, Torah, Quran, and so forth. In addition, leaders are beginning to encourage voluntary participation in prayer groups, reflection sessions, servant leadership conferences, and meditation programs. Even large firms such as Coca Cola and Boeing have begun to incorporate spirituality in their culture and business strategy (Khan, Khan, & Chaudhry, 2015). Servant leadership is uniquely positioned to support a culture that allows workplace spirituality programs to flourish.

**Workplace spirituality defined.** There are a multitude of definitions that have been given to the phrase workplace spirituality. Multiple definitions have led to there being no

consensus on such a complex topic. Guillory (2000) defined spirituality as an inner consciousness that exists within all human beings regardless of religious faith. Barnett, Krell, and Sendry (2000) defined spirituality as self-enlightenment. Dehler and Welsh (1994) tied the idea of spirituality to work stating it is a feeling that causes action that would not be taken through alternative motivation. Nash and McLennan (2001) defined spirituality as “access to a sacred force that impels life.”

This ambiguity further leads to the difficulty of studying a topic that is found to be extremely complex. As such, a concise, agreed upon definition is needed to understand how spirituality in the workplace functions. Further, a concise definition allows for researchers to gain insight into the overall benefit of organizations embracing the concepts involved in employee spirituality. Karakas (2012) stated “Spirituality is distinguished from institutionalized religion by being characterized as a private, inclusive, non-denominational, universal, human feeling...” It is further stated this secular perspective of spirituality in the workplace is necessary to encompass the diversity empirical research shows to be valuable. In this definition, spirituality takes on a broad connotation rather than being limited to the adherence beliefs and practices of any one religious institution (Karakas, 2012).

In fact, one study showed the majority of workers had positive views of spirituality in the workplace when this definition is used. When the same individuals were polled about religion in the workplace, the percentage that saw this practice as favorable dropped to just 50%. Further, the 50% that saw religion in the workplace as unfavorable held an extremely adverse opinion of such practice. In defining spirituality in the workplace in such a broad manner, it becomes possible to allow for employees to practice as they determine appropriate while avoiding the pitfalls of a topic that has served as a lightning rod in the past. Further research shows



employees that work at firms that embrace spirituality become more tolerant of differences in others even when not at work (Karakas, 2012).

**Effect on organizational performance.** There has been numerous research study that have shown spirituality in the workplace is positively correlated to an increase in organizational performance and their overall profitability. Additional research indicates when firms develop voluntary spiritual programs, there is an increased probability of success (Gupta, Kumar, & Singh, 2014). It should be noted these findings are muted by the concerns of some researchers that spirituality in the workplace will be leveraged by managers that only want to see increases in profits. It is cautioned when organizations implement spirituality programs for purely monetary gains, the results can be opposite of what is intended. As such, researchers warn workplace spirituality programs must be implemented for the purpose of enhancing employee quality of life (Van der Walt & Klerk, 2014).

In order to determine the effect on organizational performance, workplace spirituality must be reviewed on three different perspectives: human resources, philosophical, and interpersonal. First, the human resources perspective posits that spirituality improves quality of life and well-being for those employees that are affected by the program. Next, the philosophical perspective states that spirituality increase the purpose and meaning of the work that is being performed. Lastly, spirituality allows employees to feel interconnected leading to a sense of community (Karakas, 2012).

While there is research that shows a positive correlation between each of these three perspectives, there is little research that studies the three perspectives and how they interact. It is believed the cumulative effect of all three perspectives working together enhances the overall organizational performance. In fact, the belief that spirituality has the capacity to improve

performance is an extrapolation of its effect on individual well-being, meaning or purpose, and a sense of interconnectedness. To better understand this phenomenon, each perspective should be reviewed individually (Karakas, 2012).

***Human resources perspective.*** The human resources perspective is grounded in the position that integrating spirituality in the workplace enhances employee well-being by improving morale, productivity, and organizational commitment. Additionally, research shows employees that engage in spirituality programs enjoy a reduction in stress and less burnout. When these two states exist within the fabric of the organization, the overall effects are less turnover, lowered expense, and increased production throughout the organization (Van de Voorde, Paauwe, & Van Veldhoven, 2012).

The human resources perspective is especially relevant in modern workplaces as employees spend the bulk of their time on the job. Today's workplaces are the central sites for social interaction on a broad scale. Places of employment are now the driving force behind values. It is at work where most people develop meaningful relationships, provide for their families, and make substantive contributions to the greater society. For many people, work has expanded beyond the traditional boundaries replacing family and social groups. With this work centered trend, there has been a host of negative effects on the employee with stress and burnout being the most common (Van de Voorde et al., 2012).

Recent studies have shown work has become a greater portion of daily life with half of all respondents reporting having worked overtime hours in the last month. Many of those same respondents report their jobs cannot be performed over the course of a 40-hour week (Balducci, Avanzi, & Fraccaroli, 2016). While this does show a commitment to their employer, consistently working long hours is unhealthy and dissatisfying. Employees report a feeling that

employers drive them to work these long hours to obtain extrinsic rewards, promotions, and mastery of the job. However, employers must be cautious as the side effect of work related stress is absenteeism, decreased productivity, and increased illness leading to higher health insurance costs. It is estimated the cost of workplace stress exceeds \$150 billion annually in the US alone (Balducci et al., 2016).

In addition to long hours and workaholism, the current business climate of uncertainty adds to the level of stress employees experience. Layoffs, mergers, global terrorism, the rapid pace of innovation, scandals, recession, and competition contribute to corporate uncertainty. During times of uncertainty, employers respond by cutting costs and downsizing. The effect of this action on employees is increased stress and decreased productivity. Evidence supports the notion that many workers feel unappreciated, insecure in their jobs, and threatened by the way they are treated by their employers. In fact, one study found that dissatisfaction in the workplace is at a 40-year high. A majority of the respondents also report a decline in the respect and trust for organizational leaders (Balducci et al., 2016; Park, Chae, & Kim, 2017).

Research is beginning to show a reversal of spiritually bankrupt business practices has the ability to solve the problems associated with stress and burnout. In addition, developing programs that allow for the expression of spirituality increases the overall well-being of employees. Further, significant research finds a correlation between spirituality and an increase in mental health indices. The same research indicates spirituality programs have positive benefits such as increased commitment, joy, and job satisfaction. Increased commitment and job satisfaction lead to an overall increase in individual productivity and a reduction in turnover. Further, employees report the ability to express their spirituality at work makes them feel more complete and authentic (Wang & Han, 2016).

Spiritually empowered employees feel more confident and are found to be more ethical and compassionate. In addition, these employees are more creative leading to innovative approaches to challenges. This increased innovation allows for organizations to exploit new opportunities. It is a possible inference that programs with such profound benefits enhance morale and commitment while decreasing dissatisfaction, burnout, and stress. The conclusion of research has become workplace spirituality programs have positive effects on the entirety of the organization including profits (Karakas, 2012).

*Philosophical perspective.* Research shows employee productivity can be increased on a psychological level by providing a sense of purpose. The contention here is that spirituality in the workplace has the capacity to deepen the overall purpose of work. Research indicates employees believe their places of employment are and have been devoid of meaning and purpose. The nearly transactional repetition of many jobs fails to provide nourishment for the human psyche. As firms have sought to maximize profits, employee enrichment programs have been abandoned (Pierce, 2016).

In many corporations, there has been a movement towards external, solely materialistic outcomes resulting in the belief by leaders that a deeper sense of meaning is not the purpose of business. Such attitudes have led to a world that lacks depth and denies the spiritual needs of workers. However, the thought that materialistic success leads to a feeling of well-being is beginning to be questioned. This change in perspective is also being fueled but ethical transgressions, corporate crimes, and a degradation of the environment. As consumers are gaining insight into such atrocities, there is a demand for corporate social responsibility. As awareness is gained, employees are demanding more in exchange for their efforts and commitment (Bajer, 2016).

Studies show employees feel isolated in the workplace. This isolation leaves workers longing for additional meaning in their jobs. Compartmentalizing various aspects of life has profound, lasting, negative effects on employee morale. One study states 61% of employees believe that places of employment would be more fulfilling through the addition of spirituality programs. The current trend of employees searching for a deeper meaning in their work is coupled with a movement towards business ethics and a fundamental work life balance. Employers must recognize and respond appropriately to employees that question their work and its meaning (Bajer, 2016). For many employees today, their employment is more than a method of providing for their families; it has become a fundamental part of their identity. Employment is becoming a demonstration of personal values, a display of deeper motivators, and an expression of desires (Karanika-Murray, Duncan, Pontes, & Griffiths, 2015).

Work that is seen as a calling or a sacred duty takes on greater meaning leading to increased productivity and greater commitment. Employees that perceive a deeper meaning and greater significance in their work feel compelled by a greater power than extrinsic rewards can provide. Research has shown when employees feel their work serves God or other higher powers, they receive rewards not reported by individuals that lack similar spiritual motivators. Managers and leaders must understand employees seek to be recognized on a broader level than has occurred in past decades. The trend is for employees to seek out employers that recognize the totality of the employee: spirit, passions, desires, motivations, perspectives, and so forth. As such, employers that make workplace spirituality programs available will have better candidates available when making hiring decisions (Karakas, 2012).

***Interpersonal perspective.*** The interpersonal perspective of spirituality in the workplace is related to a feeling of being connected, community, sense of belonging, and dynamics of

relationships. Setting an environment conducive to employees feeling as if they belong is crucial to success in today's ultra-competitive marketplace. Scandals and downsizing of the past two decades have served to sabotage employee trust undermining any sense of belonging. The result has been decreased productivity, increased turnover, and increased cost for employers. There is a demand from modern employers to correct the transgressions of the past. At an increasing pace, employees are requiring compassion, connections, and community in the workplace. Much of this demand has occurred at the same time that traditional channels of connection have broken down. Rather than looking to family, church, and social groups, employees now require their places of employment to fill this void (Boyd & Branda, 2013).

A sense of interconnectedness is only facilitated by high quality connections in the workplace. In the best cases, the employer becomes a self-functioning community capable of providing the employee with much more than monetary income. In turn, employees feel intrinsically compelled to function at a higher level for the employer. In many cases, employees report their managers are friends. Further, employees report spending time with fellow workers and managers outside of prescribed work hours anchoring the social-employment connection (Boyd & Branda, 2013).

Research suggests workplace spirituality enhances the sense of community employees feel. Employees that are supported spiritually, in turn, feel compelled to support other employees. Therefore, even employees that do not directly engage in workplace spirituality programs indirectly experience the positive benefits of these programs. Studies show employees that are given opportunities to serve others experience higher job satisfaction, are less likely to seek employment elsewhere, experience greater group cohesion, and perform their jobs more

effectively. As these programs gain traction, the positive benefits accelerate leading to additional benefits for all involved (Hassan, Bin Nadeem, & Akhter, 2016).

**Cautions.** While workplace spirituality programs have immense benefits to employees and employers alike, there are some potential pitfalls that managers must be aware of prior to moving forward. The first concern, managers must be aware of proselytism. In diverse employment settings, proselytism has the capacity to create animosity among employees. Further, proselytism has the ability to alienate employees making them feel as if they are unable to express their own spirituality. The end result of proselytism is employees feeling frustrated, dissatisfied, and disrespected (Dean, 2012).

Managers must be aware of proselytism because such situations negate the benefits gained from workplace spirituality programs. Further, proselytism creates situations where diversity is not respected creating potential human rights or equality issues. As these issues are allowed to spread, favoritism and discrimination can result. Managers whom fail to act when made aware of such intolerance expose the corporation to the threat of costly litigation. Even when litigation is not the result, proselytism causes irreparable damage (Dean, 2012).

The second concern for managers looking to integrate spirituality programs into their corporate culture is compatibility. In many corporations, profits are the one and only concern. In these transactional environments, time and resources consumed by such programs are not found to be well spent. Further, managers in such environments report a feeling that spirituality has no place at work. While there has been a trend towards spirituality in workplace, this trend has been isolated to a minority of firms because some managers believe spirituality undermines their formal authority and challenges the status quo of a top down hierarchy. In addition, some

employees have stated they feel spirituality is a subject that should remain personal for privacy reasons (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002).

The third concern when implementing spirituality programs is the risk that managers will use such programs as tools to manipulate employees. There is evidence of employees being manipulated by overzealous managers looking to capitalize on programs that show great promise in improving productivity. However, when managers use these programs as a means to an end, the result is they are short lived. Most often, gains do not last as employees are quick to become skeptical of employer motivation (Fineman, 2006).

The challenge for organizations is to integrate workplace spirituality programs for the benefit of employees while avoiding the pitfalls previously mentioned. There are three suggestions that have shown promise. They are as follow: managers should accommodate requests made by employees that are interested in spirituality programs, there must be a genuine respect for diversity among all employees and managers, and there must be an unwavering policy that freedom of expression is embraced (Boyd & Branda, 2013). When employees are met with authentic opportunities to express their personal spiritualities at work, the results are overwhelmingly positive for everyone involved (Karakas, 2012). In the high pressure, ultra-competitive, modern business climate, employees and managers need a way to add meaning to their work and grow their hearts. Workplace spirituality has the capacity to do just that (Pierce, 2016).

**Organized religion in the workplace.** Up to this point, this section has focused on the secular connotation of spirituality in the workplace. While secular programs are becoming more popular, there are firms that include organized religious programs. However, employers tend to refrain from adopting official practices for fear of violating an individual's rights or committing



discrimination (Hambler, 2016). Still, employers are forbidden and not able to violate an employee's right to religious freedom due to current regulation.

***Right to religious freedom.*** An employee's right to religious freedom is protected in the United States by a series of laws that forbid employers and fellow employees from committing religious discrimination. The primary piece of legislation that outlaws such discrimination is Title VII of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964. Religious discrimination occurs when an employee or applicant is treated differently due to religious beliefs (Religious Discrimination, n.d.). The law extends its protection to any aspect of employment: hiring, firing, promotions, pay, benefits, and so forth. Further, there can be no condition of employment or of continued employment that involves one's religious beliefs. These protections not only apply to the employer, but also to other employees as it is illegal to harass employees on the basis of religion. Harassment is defined as a pattern of behavior that is so frequent as to cause a hostile work environment or the separation of a victim from the workplace (Religious Discrimination, n.d.).

***Religious accommodations.*** Employers are required by law to make reasonable accommodations for employees that wish to practice their religion either at work or during work hours (Religious Discrimination, n.d.). In fact, the only relief an employer has from this mandate is when such accommodations would cause undue interruption to business or burden for the employer. For example, employers are required to offer accommodations such as flexible work schedules, shift substitutions, and modifications to the policies and practices. These mandated accommodations extend to such items as grooming and dress. In order to determine which accommodations are prudent, the employee and employer should engage in mutual discovery of what type of accommodations would satisfy the employee's request (Religious Discrimination, n.d.).

*Onsite chaplaincy.* A growing trend in the modern employment settings is the inclusion of onsite chaplains. In fact, even employers that are considered to be strictly secular are beginning to embrace the idea that chaplains at the worksite bring with them a host of benefits (Fitchett, 2017). Typically, corporate chaplains are compensated by the organization directly or contracted through a third party. These individuals are versed in pastoral care and serve the spiritual and emotional needs of employees at the worksite (Seales, 2012). Most often, corporate chaplains are Protestant. One organization, *Corporate Chaplains of America* based in North Carolina, states annually they supply thousands of chaplains that meet with millions of employees across the United States.

The intent behind corporate chaplaincy is to develop a holistic approach to the needs of employees. Just as some employers include benefits such as gym memberships or onsite Zumba classes, onsite chaplaincy is meant to give employees the option to have their spiritual needs met while at work (Fitchett, 2017). Recent research shows the idea is gaining popularity with employees. As this idea gains traction with employees, employers are taking a look at the concept (Fitchett, 2017). Some programs have been so successful that employees are reporting the availability of corporate chaplains weighs heavily when deciding whether to remain with their current employer or not.

Corporate chaplains serve a multitude of needs (Ebert & Strehlow, 2017). Corporate chaplains work by allowing the employee to lead the conversation. In many cases, chaplains simply listen giving employees an outlet for frustrations that could become volatile if not expressed in a healthy setting. In other cases, chaplains give advice on how to deal with interpersonal relationships. Corporate chaplains even assist in making funeral arrangements for employees or loved ones (Ebert & Strehlow, 2017). Often time, corporate chaplains do not even

mention Jesus Christ. This approach seems to work to gain the trust of employees that may not be comfortable with professing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ in the workplace.

Employers also benefit from the inclusion of corporate chaplains (Fitchett, 2017). While this is namely in the form of increased productivity and profits, there are other less measurable benefits. For example, chaplains are thought to reduce the likelihood of interpersonal conflict at work; giving the fact that managers can spend an exorbitant amount of time dealing with such conflicts, it becomes easy to see how this is beneficial to the employer. Organizations that include corporate chaplaincy programs see less turnover (Seales, 2012). Further, the inclusion of such programs is another recruiting tool that can be used when seeking top talent.

***Religious diversity.*** Diversity in the workplace has long been regarded as beneficial to employers. The inclusion of individuals from a multitude of backgrounds increases innovation while more effectively vetting new initiatives (Guillaume, Dawson, Woods, Sacramento, & West, 2013). However, most employers view diversity in the secular sense. However, the inclusion of religion can provide benefits to employee and employer alike (Ebert & Strehlow, 2017). The challenge for employers becomes addressing the issues that can arise when religious diversity leads to tension amongst employees.

There are several things employers can do to ensure religious diversity is a benefit to all that are involved (Bouma, 2016). To begin, employers should provide training to employees on how to cope with religious diversity. Religion can be a volatile subject. When practitioners of different religions collide, the outcome can be destructive for all involved. Training can serve to mitigate much of this volatility. Training programs should include skills that help employees accept differences and focus on commonalities (Bouma, 2016). Next, employers should offer time off to employees of all faiths so they may take part in their own religious customs. Finally,

when conflict does occur, managers should not overreact when minor situations arise. However, firms need to adopt a zero-tolerance policy when major issues crop up (Bouma, 2016).

### **Spiritual Leadership**

Spiritual leadership is redefining the leadership paradigm in modern corporate facilities. What was once considered taboo has become a trend that is gaining momentum and showing the potential to change the way leaders interact with their direct reports (Nicolae, Ion, & Nicolae, 2013). Spiritual leadership is defined as a method of leadership anchored by values based on morals, ethics, and religion. In addition, spiritual leadership is facilitated through organizational culture designed to address corporate and social goals (Hackett & Wang, 2012). The end goal of spiritual leadership is threefold: improve working conditions, increase the motivation of employees at every level of the hierarchy, and ameliorate decision making.

Spiritual leadership is new in terms of its application to organizational behavior. This new trend towards incorporating spirituality is rooted in a continued and deepening dissatisfaction being reported by a growing number of employees. Research has shown the source of the latest dissatisfaction is materialism, perceived wage inequality, worker demoralization, downsizing, and constant change necessitated by the ever-changing market (Duthely, 2017). The demands of dissatisfied workers are becoming more prevalent as regulation has found it difficult to curb the unethical practices of corporate America. Spiritual leadership has shown to have the capacity to succeed on the individual level; even when regulatory mandate fails (Duthely, 2017).

**Spirituality models.** There is not a clear consensus as to the design and function of spirituality in leadership. Rather, numerous models have been developed (Markow & Klenke, 2005). To begin, Fry (2006) proposed an intrinsic model designed to promote motivation

through spiritual leadership. Fry referred to this model as “The organizational outcomes of commitment and productivity.” The premise of this model is that employee motivation is facilitated by attitude, values, and behavior (Fry, 2006). In addition, Fry warns against leaders discussing their own individual faith for fear of creating a perception the organization sanctions a particular faith.

In contrast, other models do focus on religion as a critical component of organizational success. In fact, the leader’s spirituality has the capacity to compel employees to be extremely committed to the organization (Kriger & Seng, 2007). This position is based on a leader’s spirituality being the source of his or her goals and vision. The goals and vision directly translate to corporate social responsibility, organizational culture, and profitability. Kriger and Seng (2007) posited the leader’s spirituality originates from religious beliefs.

Leaders with strong religious faith report a desire to be close to God, a calling to serve God, and a belief in a loving God. To strengthen their faith, leaders state they pray and read scripture on a regular basis (Fetzer, 2010). To measure spirituality, the multidimensional measure of religiousness/spirituality (MMRS) was developed (Fetzer, 2003). The questionnaire is regarded as the foremost tool to gauge spirituality due to its comprehensive nature. Fetzer (2003) posited a strong sense of spirituality has the capability of positively impacting an individual’s health and well-being.

**Impact on managerial decision-making processes.** In organizations that employ spiritual leadership, the motivations that direct action are far different from their non-spiritual counterparts. As such, managerial decision-making is different. In fact, spiritual leadership affects organizational vision, the mission, and the methods used to stimulate employee execution (Meng, 2016). There are three fundamental ways that spiritual leaders function that is different

from other types of leaders. They are as follows: act from a different assertion, use intrinsic rewards, and work to balance social and business needs (Meng, 2016).

The first of the differences, assertion, takes a far different approach to leadership. Traditional methods of leadership are grounded in the rationalist perspective. The goal of leadership training has been to identify successful practices and replicate them. While this can be successful, there are countless examples of where well-trained managers, that executed properly, failed. Further, management techniques based on this outdated approach are prone to failure in times of uncertainty (Ford & Lawler, 2007). Conversely, in times of uncertainty, spiritual leaders are proven well equipped for the challenges they face. This is because spiritual leaders employ a combination of rationality and spirituality to determine the best plan of action (Meng, 2016). Rather than use a singular focus such as profit, spiritual leaders use the welfare of employees, the firm, and society as a whole to make decisions.

Continuing, spiritual leaders are able to motivate employees by using intrinsic rewards. To facilitate this, firms develop policies that are designed to evoke spiritual values and enhance intrinsic motivation (Meng, 2016). Spiritual leadership involves developing an understanding of the desires and motives of individual employees. Once leaders understand the drivers of employees, they are better prepared to design a work environment that is more fulfilling for each employee. Further, spiritual leaders seek to drive employee efforts through a relationship built on trust and an understanding of how each task affects business outcomes (Mubasher, Salman, Irfan, & Jabeen, 2017). In contrast, traditional managerial process seeks to drive employee performance through rationality, problem solving, and professional growth.

Finally, spiritual leaders make a concerted effort to balance the needs of the organization with the greater needs of society. While the spiritual leader understands the need for a level of

profit, the driving motivation is not the profit maximization at all cost mindset that seems prevalent in the modern corporate setting (Mubasher et al., 2017). Spiritual leaders report a desire to compel their organizations to include concepts such as a sense of calling, altruistic behavior, and membership. It should be noted, spiritual leadership is more than just adopting an organizational culture that makes morals, ethics, and religious values a priority (Ford & Lawler, 2007). In addition, spiritual leaders focus on the group facilitating a sense of belonging. However, these leaders still appreciate the desires and values of individuals.

### **Transition and Summary**

The ability to design, implement, and maintain organizational change is critical to the long-term success of most firms (Vaill, 1991). There are many catalysts to organizational change and nearly as many models developed by researchers (Scher & Lewis, 2008). In order to be successful during change initiatives, the firm must employ the proper style of leadership. In fact, choosing the wrong style of leadership can hinder the initiative to the point of certain failure (Seo et al., 2012).

While there are many methods to lead a firm, servant leadership is uniquely positioned to allow a firm to be successful regardless of the challenges faced (Greenleaf, 1977). Moreover, Christian centered servant leadership has the added benefit of allowing an individual to lead a firm for the benefit of the Kingdom of God (Blanchard & Hodges, 2005). Further, Christian centered servant leadership is extremely effective at facilitating organizational change (Hardy, 1990).

While there has been a tremendous amount of research performed on organizational change and servant leadership, a review of the literature has revealed there has been little work done that determines the overall effectiveness of servant leadership as a means of designing and

implementing change initiatives (Patrnchak, 2015). Further, there has been even less research conducted on how to use Christian centered servant leadership to facilitate change in the automotive aftermarket. Reducing this gap will serve to give leaders in the automotive aftermarket a style of leadership that can be used to ensure viability well into the future.

In the next section, the researcher will give a detailed description of the project. This section will include a restatement of the Purpose Statement, describe the Role of the Researcher, and discuss Participants. In addition, the researcher will discuss Research Method and Design, Data Collection, and Data Analysis Techniques. Finally, the section will end with a discussion about Reliability and Validity.



## Section 2: The Project

Retailers are struggling to meet the challenges brought about by increasing competition in the marketplace (Brynjolfsson et al., 2013). The target sector, automotive aftermarket, continues to fail to address the problems they will soon face due to changes in their market (Ramcharran, 2013). Experts believe retail's lack of response is the driving force behind the trend of large chain retailers filing for bankruptcy or deciding to go out of business (Kestenbaum, 2017). In fact, experts believe an organization's readiness to implement change can be the difference between success and insolvency (Vakola, 2013). Research completed by Ramcharran (2013) suggested these concepts are applicable to the automotive aftermarket.

This study was designed for the purpose of contributing to the body of literature regarding the efficacy of Christian centered servant leadership in facilitating organizational change in the automotive aftermarket. The coming section will include additional details about the study. This section will include the following information: purpose statement, role of the researcher, participants, research methods and design, population sampling, data collection, data analysis technique, and reliability and validity

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore the insights and perceptions of individuals that have experienced change to organizational structure in the automotive aftermarket. Specifically, the focus was on change led by Christian servant leaders in an effort to provide business leaders with strategies and processes that can be used to more effectively facilitate such changes. The focus of this research study was front line retail managers that experienced structural changes to their respective organizations under the tutelage of Christian servant leaders. Their perceptions of Christian servant leadership will indicate the

overall effectiveness of this style of leadership in facilitating structural change in an effort to sustain revenue (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The implications for such understanding can be greater loyalty of employees, greater performance of the firm, and more sustainable growth patterns for the organization (Clercq et al., 2014).

### **Role of the Researcher**

In phenomenology, like other types of qualitative research, the researcher functions as the primary instrument for the purpose of data collection (Anney, 2014). In this study, the researcher served a multitude of roles. First, the researcher designed questions that were asked during the interview process. Next, the researcher identified and contacted participants. The researcher also conducted interviews with participants. The researcher coded the interviews in order to identify any themes that were present. Finally, the researcher interpreted the results in an effort to determine how the information related to the proposed research questions that were included in section one.

In addition to these roles, the researcher has an obligation to conduct all research and data analysis in an ethical manner (Resnik, 2015). The researcher completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) to perform non-invasive research involving human subjects.

### **Participants**

In order to gain access to participants, the researcher used the online service, [findparticipants.com](http://findparticipants.com). Using this service, the researcher was able to design the screening criterion to ensure all study participants had the experiences necessary to provide insight into the target phenomenon. This service provided a list of individuals that had previously expressed interest in taking part in interviews such as the ones that were conducted to glean pertinent

information. Once identified, these individuals were contacted to set an appointment time and place. The interview took place at the convenience of the participant at his or her desired location.

Participants' identifying information were kept confidential. The published study materials, reports, and notes did not include any information that would divulge the identity of participants. Transcripts were coded to allow for the identification of themes and facilitate data interpretation. Interview transcripts and coding were maintained on a password protected hard drive that is stored in a safe maintained by the researcher for three years. After three years, the files will be destroyed. In addition, participants were able to withdraw from the study at any time.

### **Research Method and Design**

For this study, the researcher chose to use a qualitative method, phenomenological research design. In the coming section, there is a description of this method and design. Justification for having chosen this design was also discussed. In addition, the researcher provided his logic behind why a qualitative, phenomenological research design was well suited to gaining an understanding of the lived experiences of front line store managers in the automotive aftermarket in the Triad region of North Carolina.

**Method.** The qualitative research method was chosen for this study. Using this method, the researcher sought to answer one or more research questions by gathering unstructured data gathered from study participants (Lewis, 2015). The data are gained through a series of interviews (Venkatesh et al., 2013). For this study, the researcher conducted a series of face-to-face interviews to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of each study participant with regard to focused phenomenon. During each interview, the researcher took notes, recorded the

responses, and transcribed the interaction with the participant. Qualitative design is useful in this study because the researcher will ask open-ended questions to gain a rich understanding of the experiences and perspectives of the participants (Ingham-Broomfield, 2014).

**Research Design.** For this study, the researcher chose a phenomenological research design. Phenomenological research is well suited to applications where the researcher seeks to describe an experience rather than explain the underlying cause of the phenomenon (Waters, 2017). The core of the phenomenological design is the notion that within a set of shared experiences, there is an essence (Patton, 2014). In other words, individuals that experience the same phenomenon will have a number of similar reactions or thoughts. Phenomenology seeks to reduce those individual experiences to understanding the commonality of the experience; in doing so, researchers are able to discount individual nuances that are unique to a particular participant (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Robison (2014) suggested that qualitative researchers use a minimum of 20 participants. This number allows the researcher to develop a rapport with the participants improving the overall quality of the exchange allowing for the researcher to glean better data (Robinson, 2014). Further, conducting at least 20 interviews serves to uncover individual bias and attitudes towards the target phenomenon (Austin, 2014). While saturation of data can occur with a smaller sample, around 12 participants, using 20 participants serves to ferret out bias that can be problematic in qualitative research (Latham, 2013). It should be noted that 20 participants is also a good number to mitigate nuances that occur due to participants varied background (Latham, 2013).

This study included 20 interviews conducted face-to-face. Prior researchers have found phenomenology to be well suited for gaining an in-depth insight in the efficacy of servant leadership (Carter & Baghurst, 2014). The rationale for selecting phenomenology is the desire to

gain in-depth information on the lived experiences of front line retail managers in the automotive aftermarket sector of the retail industry with respect to Christian centered servant leadership.

The understanding gained can lead to greater loyalty of employees, greater performance of the firm, and more sustainable growth patterns for the organization (Clercq et al., 2014).

### **Population and Sampling**

In this study, participants were selected from a purposive, criterion sample of adults in the Triad area of North Carolina who were front line store managers of retail chain stores in the automotive aftermarket. A purposive sample is comprised of individuals that can contribute pertinent information on the phenomenon that is the subject of this study (Lewis, 2015). In the case of a phenomenology, purposive sampling is found to be superior when compared to random sampling due to the increased quality of data (Barrat, Ferris, & Lenton, 2014). Purposive sampling is recognized as appropriate for the selection of participants for qualitative studies that use interviews as the method of data collection (Cleary, Horsfall, & Hayter, 2014). Purposive sampling allows researchers the ability to choose study participants that have first-hand knowledge regarding the target phenomenon (DeFeo, 2013). It is for this reason that a purpose sampling was well suited for this study.

Front line store managers in the automotive aftermarket will have knowledge of the effectiveness of various leadership styles in facilitating the changes necessary to ensure long-term viability. More specifically, criterion sampling was used. This type of sampling selects participants based on a predetermined set of attributes that will cause all participants to be a member of the target population (Bennot et al., 2016). The researcher did not include any requirements such as race and gender as these characteristics were beyond the scope of this study.

Various research methodologies require different sample sizes. In general, qualitative studies require smaller sample sizes than their quantitative counterparts (Boddy, 2016). Fewer study participants in qualitative research allows for a deeper inquiry into the experiences of each individual (Boddy, 2016). The important factor to look for in qualitative research is saturation; according to Merriam (2015), saturation can take place around the time the researcher has conducted as few as 12 interviews. Saturation occurs when the researcher has conducted enough interviews to where there are no new themes found in subsequent interviews (Boddy, 2016).

Other researchers believe the qualitative studies should include between 15 and 30 participants (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). The underlying idea surrounding saturation is the results of the study become generalizable to individuals that are outside the study population (Boddy, 2016). The planned number of participants in this study was set at 20. However, the researcher was aware additional interviews may have been necessary if saturation was not reached.

### **Data Collection**

**Instruments.** In qualitative research, it is common for the researcher to function as an essential piece of the data collection process. In fact, the researcher is the primary individual collecting data (Moustakas, 1994). To gain an understanding of the target phenomenon, qualitative researchers develop open-ended questions that are specific to the study (Roulston, 2013). In this study, the researcher developed his own open-ended, qualitative question that aimed to gain an understanding of the study participants' lived experiences with Christian centered servant leadership and its ability to facilitate organizational change.

During data collection in this study, the researcher's role was to conduct and record each of the 20 interviews. In addition to administrating the research questions, the researcher also

observed the study participants, making note of any body language or non-verbal communication that was conveyed during the interview. The data gained, through both verbal and non-verbal communication, will be key to answering the research questions that were presented in Part 1 (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

The researcher developed a list of open-ended questions to probe the experiences of participants. In addition, clarifying questions were part of the interview. While a complete interview guide has been included as Appendix A, there were several questions that were key and related directly to the research questions and problem statement. The following questions were primary in gaining an understanding of participants' experiences with the target phenomenon:

3. Please describe your experiences with organizational change.
4. Please describe your experiences with Christian centered servant leadership.
5. Please describe your view on Christian centered servant leadership versus other types of leadership.

Question three sought to gain an understanding of participants' experience with organizational change. Questions four and five were geared towards understanding the efficacy of Christian centered servant leadership versus other types of leadership methods.

In addition to the data collection process, the researcher engaged in the process of bracketing. Researchers use bracketing to address preconceived notions that may have a pernicious effect on the outcome of the study (Sorsa, Kiikkala, & Åstedt-Kurki, 2015). In order to bracket, the researcher recorded his own thoughts and feelings regarding the studied phenomenon prior to beginning each interview (Sorsa et al., 2015). Bracketing is meant to prevent the researcher from impacting his understanding of the lived experiences of study

participants. Further, bracketing leads to a deeper understanding of participants' views, emotions, and experiences (Mungaray, 2017). In this study, the researcher bracketed in two ways. First, the researcher maintained a bracketing journal during data collection, analysis, and during the final research report. This journal included any occurrence of a bias or preconceived notion experienced by the researcher. Second, the researcher included everything that was bracketed in the final report. This allowed readers to be aware of the researcher's bias as they read the report.

The researcher conducted each interview with the assistance of the interview questionnaire, a recording device, and a laptop computer. The researcher also took handwritten notes during each interview taking care to not record any information that may have lead to the identification of study participants. These notes included nonverbal cues and body language; nonverbal information were used to assist in data analysis. Ultimately, all information pertaining to this study will be maintained on a password protected computer and destroyed after three years.

The researcher developed a series of qualitative, open-ended interview questions in an attempt to gain an understanding of the lived experiences and insights of the front-line store managers in the automotive aftermarket. Each interview was conducted in a semi-structured fashion. This approach allowed for an opportunity to ask clarifying and probing questions and for study participants to expound on any response they felt needed additional information. In addition, open-ended questions allowed for the researcher to gain a deep understanding of each participants' experiences with the targeted phenomenon; researchers find open-ended questions far superior to closed-ended questions due to an inherent lack of limitation (Drew, 2014). The complete interview guide is included in the appendix.



**Data collection technique.** In order to collect the data necessary for this study, the researcher conducted interviews. The interviews were face-to-face at a location designated by the participant that were chosen during the initial contact. The researcher started each interview with a brief overview of the purpose of the study. This introduction also informed the participant of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. With the permission of the participants, the researcher recorded the entirety of each interview making notes to aid in data analysis. The interview consisted of the researcher administering each interview question, allotting participants ample time to respond, and asking follow-up questions to clarify any response not completely understood. Each interview was completely transcribed within one week. A copy of the transcript was made available to the participant so he or she could ensure its accuracy.

**Data organization techniques.** In order to organize the data, NVivo 12 was used. Once interviews were transcribed, they were coded to develop themes. The researcher determined the point of saturation for this study. Handwritten notes were organized from the interview. All data collected, raw and coded, were stored on a password protected external computer hard drive. All notes and the hard drive will be secured in a fireproof safe and maintained for a period of three years. After three years, all data will be electronically erased or shredded.

### **Data Analysis Technique**

Once data collection was complete pursuant to the previously described process, the researcher began the task of data analysis. The analysis was completed manually and with the assistance of NVivo 12 as outlined by Moustakas (1994). The process used was as follows: list all data and assign groups, reduce the data in order to discover themes, group themes that were recurring, validate all themes were present in participant transcripts, develop textual descriptions for all themes, develop descriptions based on the previously developed textual descriptions, and

create textual-structural descriptions based on the prior two steps. Analysis of the data collected during qualitative research allows researchers the ability to gain a deeper understanding of the sourced information (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014).

The researcher used a qualitative data analysis program to assist in coding data and developing themes from interview transcripts. Qualitative data analysis software allows the researcher to deepen understanding of the data due to improved thoroughness of the data analysis phase (Wood, Paulus, Atkins, & Macklin, 2015). The software chosen for this project was NVivo 12. Using NVivo 12, the researcher was able to code the raw data, annotate the coded data, and develop recurrent themes to enhance the understanding of transcript narratives. Using software, the researcher expects to be able to manage a larger volume of data while improving the overall accuracy of analytical efforts (Cope, 2014). After transcribing the recorded interviews, the researcher will perform an initial manual analysis of the data as prescribed by Moustaka (1994). After manual analysis, the researcher uploaded each of the transcripts to NVivo 12 to allow for a thorough qualitative data analysis.

Qualitative, phenomenological research generates a tremendous amount of narrative data. In order to thoroughly understand the data, the researcher must reduce these data during the analysis phase (Blair, 2016). In order to better understand the data, researchers use coding. Coding involves grouping the data to identify themes and recurrent ideas expressed by multiple participants (Blair, 2016). In fact, coding should be the first step taken to reduce information and identify themes (Moustakas, 1994). In order to identify themes, the researcher in the study looked for phrases that were consistent in multiple interviews. Once themes were identified, the researcher used member checking to ensure the analysis properly represents the experiences of the participants.

## **Reliability and Validity**

Reliability and validity have different connotations in qualitative research than in quantitative research (Creswell, 2003). Even still, qualitative researchers must take care to ensure the reliability and validity of any study performed. In order to ensure reliability and validity in the study, the data collection process was consistent from one interview to the next. Failure on the part of the researcher to consistently conduct the interview in the same fashion each time can skew results (Noble & Smith, 2015). In qualitative research, reliability ensures that other researchers will achieve the same results when duplicating the methods just as the original researcher has done (Gay, 1987; Wiktorowicz, 2017). To ensure reliability, researchers employ methods such as member checking to ensure the transcribed narrative is consistent with intent of intent and experience of the participant (Sigstad, 2014).

Qualitative research such as this study should include two measures of validity: internal and external (Maxwell, 2005). Validity is regarded as a key attribute of qualitative research. In order to determine validity, researchers use logic, verification, and the ability to replicate the study as a whole (Marshall & Rossman, 2015). In quantitative studies, researchers look to determine a causal relationship. Further, generalizability refers to the how well the findings of the study can be applied to individual outside the study. However, validity in qualitative research refers to how appropriate the tools and processes are at measuring the target phenomenon (Leung, 2015).

**Reliability.** Reliability in quantitative research refers to the exact repeatability of the study. However, the use of such a strict definition for the concept of reliability in qualitative research is epistemologically unreasonable (Grossoehme, 2014). Instead, qualitative researchers seek to achieve consistency in the entire process. It is reasonable for qualitative researchers to

tolerate a level of variance so long as the methodology is consistent, and the data are ontologically comparable (Silverman, 2018). Silverman (2018) continued by suggesting a five-pronged approach to ensuring reliability in qualitative research: data analysis, data comparison, consistent data usage, inclusion of data that are counter to emergent themes, and the inclusion of tables. Researchers must constantly compare extracted data to the source (Guercini, 2014). Further, the concept of dependability in qualitative research is regarded as comparable to reliability in quantitative research (Trainor & Graue, 2014).

To ensure reliability in this study, the researcher provided a comprehensive description of the purpose to the research, made available all interview questions, and included the participant selection parameters. By providing these items, other researchers should be able to follow the procedure outlined in this study and reach similar results (Grossoehme, 2014). Upon completion of this study, details were given relating to data collection and data analysis.

**Validity.** In qualitative studies, validity is critical (Wang & Lien, 2013). Internal validity is a statement of how appropriate the methods, tools, processes, and data are (Waterman, 2013). Validity is the measure of how effectively the research questions fit the objective, how appropriate the design is for answering the research questions, how well the sampling and data analysis suit the design, and how valid the results are for the sample. Further, validity is a representation of how well the data fits participants' experience with the studied phenomenon (Morse, 2015). The researcher is responsible for the outcome of the study as he has worked to collect and analyze the data. To ensure the maximum level of validity, the researcher must establish a rapport with participants and instill confidence the outcome will accurately represent the statements gathered during the interview process (Humphry & Heldsinger, 2014).

In qualitative research, there are four elements that ensure validity will be achieved. They are as follows: dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Guzys, Dickson-Swift, Kenny, & Threlkeld, 2015). To ensure validity was realized, this study made use of member checking. Member checking involves having the research participants review the transcripts of their interview to ensure accuracy is maintained with respect to their statements and experiences (Koelsch, 2013). Further, the researcher will repeat data analysis multiple times to ensure all emergent themes are identified (Yin, 2013). Next, the researcher used triangulation. Triangulation is the process of analyzing research questions from several perspectives (Tugwell & Knottnerus, 2015). Finally, the researcher made available conflicting data and reported any bias he held.

External validity, also known as transferability, is how well the data gleaned from the study of the sample can be generalized to a larger population (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). To ensure the overall transferability of research finding, the process is similar to that employed to ensure internal validity. For example, researchers can ensure transferability through the use of systematic sampling of research participants, triangulation, and maintaining an audit trail (Tugwell & Knottnerus, 2015). To ensure sufficient information is made available for other researchers to assess the generalization of study findings, a description of the phenomenon and study participants should be made available for review (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013).

### **Transition and Summary**

This qualitative, phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of front line retail store managers in the automotive aftermarket sector in the Triad region of North Carolina. The study participants were part of purposive sample selected for their exposure to the use of Christian centered servant leadership in facilitating organizational change. The researcher

conducted interviews, transcribed the statements conveyed during each interview, and uploaded the data into NVivo 12, a qualitative analytic software program. In addition, themes were identified. Section two included information on how the research identified study participant, conducted the interviews, and analyzed data. During the data analysis phase, themes were identified to better understand the target phenomenon.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions, insights, and lived experiences of 20 front line retail managers that work in the automotive aftermarket in the Triad area of North Carolina. The managers were chosen because they have experienced organizational change at the hands of Christian centered servant leaders. It was the intent of the researcher to determine the level of efficacy involved in such an approach in an effort to provide organizations with an understanding of how to employees respond to Christian centered servant leadership. The role of the researcher was to conduct each interview, audibly record the entirety of each interview, transcribe the participants' response, and analyze the data consistent with Moustakas' (1994) approach. Specifically, the modified van Kaam approach was used. The two research questions this study sought to answer are as follows: What style of leadership do front line retail managers utilize in the change process? Is Christian servant leadership superior to other forms of leadership in facilitating organizational change?

The modified van Kaam approach is appropriate for the analysis of data generated by this study because it allows the researcher to explore the lived experiences of participants (Moustakas, 1994). In addition, the researcher was able to use this approach to group responses into themes allowing for a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences with the target phenomenon. As expected, the interviews yielded significant information about the efficacy of Christian centered servant leadership. The resulting themes give organizations an understanding of how Christian centered servant leadership functions in facilitating organizational change.

#### **Overview of Study**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to conduct an exploration into how Christian centered servant leadership affects the implementation and sustainability of

organizational change in the automotive aftermarket in the Triad region of North Carolina. The research involved gaining insight into the lived experiences of 20 front retail store managers in the automotive aftermarket. In order to guide the research, the following questions were used: What style of leadership do front line retail managers utilize in the change process? Is Christian servant leadership superior to other forms of leadership in facilitating organizational change?

In order to source the necessary data, the study used semi-structured interviews. These interviews were conducted between the researcher and each of the 20 study participants on a one-on-one basis. During each interview, study participants provided responses to a series of open-ended questions that sought to answer the two research questions previously listed. Each question was asked in sequential order. Each interview followed an exacting process each time an interview was conducted. The process of asking question one, then two all the way through question eight was followed for each interview. Due to the exploratory nature of this study, participants were encouraged to provide extensive detail of their experiences with Christian centered servant leadership's effectiveness in times of organizational change. During these interviews, study participants provided an in-depth description of their lived experiences regarding Christian centered servant leadership's effectiveness in implementing organizational change.

Each interview transcript was checked by the appropriate study participant. This was accomplished after every interview using the exact same process each time. Next, the transcripts were uploaded to NVivo 12 software; using this software assists in the identification of codes and themes. In an effort to maintain confidentiality, participants were assigned pseudonyms; Participant 1 through Participant 20. As prescribed by Moustakas (1994), the researcher used the modified van Kaam approach to collect and reduce the data in an effort to identify emergent



themes. Using this process, themes were sorted into nodes. Sorting themes into nodes allowed for a deeper understanding of the studied phenomenon as perceived by participants.

### **Anticipated Themes/Perceptions**

The researcher expects to find that Christian servant leadership is effective in the facilitation of organizational change. Other studies have shown this form of leadership to be effective in guiding the operations of corporate retail chains (Rego, Reis Junior, & Pina e Cunha, 2014). Christian servant leadership has been shown to be highly effective and applicable to a multitude of settings and venues (Blanchard, & Hodges, 2005). However, a formal study has not been completed on the efficacy of Christian servant leadership used to compel organizational change in the automotive aftermarket (Patrnchak, 2015).

While the researcher did not have preconceived indications of the exact nature of the emergent themes this study revealed, he was confident that Christian servant leadership would show to be an extremely effective leadership model. This notion was based on 25 years in business serving in various roles. During this time, the researcher worked for leaders that used various leadership styles. Anecdotally, the researcher noticed the efficacy and outcome of servant leadership when compared to other forms of leadership. In fact, it was this casual observation coupled with formal academics that led to his passion to study this phenomenon empirically.

### **Presentation of the Findings**

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to answer the following questions: What style of leadership do front line retail managers utilize in the change process? Is Christian servant leadership superior to other forms of leadership in facilitating organizational change? To answer these questions, the researcher used a series of semi-structured interviews

that sought to delve into the lived experiences of participants concerning Christian centered servant leadership used to facilitate organizational change.

The study was conducted by interviewing 20 front line store managers in the automotive aftermarket in the Triad region of North Carolina. The semi-structured nature of the interview allowed participants to share their experiences with the study phenomenon. Prior to beginning the interview, each person granted consent by signing and returning to the researcher a consent form that gave cursory information about the study as well as how to withdraw.

The study data were comprised of study participants' responses to interview questions. The researcher's role during the study was as follows: conduct, record, and transcribe each interview and verify the findings by way of member checking. After each interview was transcribed, the researcher used Moustakas' (1994) modified van Kaam method to perform the initial analysis of the data. Once the initial analysis of data was complete, the data were uploaded to NVivo 12 for further analysis and coding.

To ensure the accuracy of the data, the researcher compared the transcripts with hand written notes as prescribed by Oleinik (2011). Member checking was also used to ensure accuracy of the findings. Using this approach, the researcher provided each participant with an account of the interpretations gleaned during each interview. Each of the 20 study participants reviewed their respective transcripts and confirmed the data and interpretations are representative of their lived experiences. The results address the research question as related to Christian centered servant leadership employed to facilitate organizational change.

### **Emergent Themes**

The themes that emerged from the study are as follows:

1. Empathy

2. Listening
3. Communication
4. Motivation
5. Employee development
6. Commitment

The emergent themes from this study are relevant to the efficiency of Christian servant leadership. Study participants were able to discuss their experiences with Christian servant leadership's effectiveness at facilitating organizational change. These themes provide information and focus areas business leaders can use to build strategy directed toward organizational change. These themes suggest that they can equally be utilized by business leaders in the automotive aftermarket to develop sustained synergy in using Christian centered servant leadership in the change process.

**Emergent theme 1: Empathy.** Consistent with the findings of Liden, Wayne, Chenwell, and Mueser (2014), servant leaders show genuine empathy for their followers. Empirical evidence has found that empathy serves to build mutual trust between leaders and followers throughout the hierarchy. Further, this trust works to compel employees to be more receptive to direction than if such a relationship did not exist (Dinh et al., 2014). Multiple participants in this study have indicated that empathy from their direct supervisors and shown to their employees affects the outcome of change initiatives.

Empathy shown by leaders is thought to produce work environments that are more enjoyable for employees (Rahman & Castelli, 2013). In facilities managed by empathetic leaders, employee perspectives are better understood (Muna & Zennie, 2011). Rahman and Castelli (2013) posited that empathy skills are essential for modern leaders as they manage

employees with diverse backgrounds and skills. It is imperative that leaders possess or gain empathy skills to promote behaviors that improve the propensity of organizational and initiative success (Abujarad, 2011).

When leaders employee genuine empathy, employees perceive them as more effective (Grant & Berry, 2011). However, this perception is not just anecdotal. Research suggests empathetic leaders are more effective leading to greater success (Noubar, Che Rose, Kumar, & Salleh, 2011). This greater effectiveness is thought to stem from the level of sensitivity that is shown towards others ultimately creating an open atmosphere. When leaders have empathy for others, they tend to be more flexible and more willing to attempt tasks by alternative means. Further, empathetic leaders possess more positive attitudes towards change initiatives enhancing the opportunity for such initiatives to succeed (Abujarad, 2011).

As organizations increase in size and expand across borders, it is inevitable that leaders will continue to encounter individuals that are dissimilar in culture and custom to their own inherent nature. Empathy allows leaders to connect to employees (Muna & Zennie, 2011). When this connection occurs, empathy influences motivation, inspiration, and vision. Further, a leader's empathy has the ability to enhance employee optimism and commitment (Cockerell, 2009). Each of these characteristics has been found to be positively correlated with success when implementing organizational change, the mitigation of costs, and the overall success of the firm.

Of the 20 interviews that were conducted, 16 participants or (80%) indicated that empathy shown by leaders affected the outcome of instruction, especially when major changes were undertaken. Of the 16 participants that cited empathy as a factor, 12 participants stated that

empathy from their direct leader is significantly important to overall success of directives. The remaining four participants indicated a lack of empathy is detrimental to motivation.

All study participants agreed that empathy shown by their direct leader would better compel them to undertake change initiatives. These findings align with the conclusion of Klimecki, Mayer, Jusyte, Scheeff, and Schonenberg (2016) that empathy in leadership for one's direct employees serves to increase motivation amongst group members. A sample of statements that support empathy follows. "When my district manager shows a genuine concern for my wellbeing, I know I can count on him for guidance" (Participant 3). "When I am having difficulty with some aspect of my job, I can call my manager. She is always there to listen and provide support" (Participant 11). "Even when I am dealing with struggles outside of work, I feel comfortable calling my boss. He has helped me through some extremely difficult times. It is because of him that I stay with the company" (Participant 16).

In the past, I have had managers that did not care about the people involved with the company. These managers were only focused on numbers and making budget. It was tough to come to work after a while. In fact, it was not long that I began looking for a new job. You just can't conduct business without any type of concern for the people in the store. (Participant 5)

In the past, when my managers have been tyrants, I don't want to work with them. I have had to put up with that a lot in the past because I need to work to provide for my family. But, those jobs were the kinds of places that I dreaded getting up in the morning. I am glad to say that my current manager is not like that. (Participant 9)

My manager is available to give direction anytime I need it. As a relatively new store manager, this guidance is necessary so that I can know that I am doing what I should be

doing. Rather than just give me a list of tasks that I need to work on, he takes time to listen and guide me. I have desires to advance past the store level. My manager understands this and gives me input of how to succeed and meet my goals. (Participant 13)

The consensus of this study is that empathetic managers are more pleasant to work for. This finding is consistent with Sarkus' (2014) conclusion that empathy compels employees to become more dedicated to their employers. In addition, Sarkus (2014) concluded that employees that work for empathetic leaders are more likely to buy in to initiatives proposed by their manager. Perhaps more interesting is the alignment with the findings of Wang and Hsieh (2013). In their research, Wang and Hsieh (2013) concluded a lack of empathy amongst business leaders, results in disengagement and a lack of trust.

**Emergent theme 2: Listening.** In line with empathy, servant leaders listen to input from employees at all level of the hierarchy. Mishra, Boynton, and Mishra (2014) found that leaders that listen to their employees create enhanced employee engagement. In addition, leaders that actively seek input from employees gain buy in from those individuals (Mishra et al., 2014). Further, the outcome of the planning phase is a more feasible, well vetted vision of the future state of the firm (Woodman, 2014).

In situations where leaders listen to input from employees, the outcome is greater success (Lloyd, Boer, & Voelpel, 2015). There are five elements present in leader listening skills. They are as follows: “perception, attention, interpretation, remembering, and responding” (Lloyd et al., 2015). Patterson (2013) opined that listening is the single most important skill that a leader can possess. Patterson (2013) continued by stating effective listening skills can compensate for leaders that are deficient in other skill areas.

When leaders listen to what their employees are saying, the propensity of organizational success increases (Roche, 2017). In addition, training managers to develop enhanced listening skills has been found to enhance understanding when in multicultural settings (Parks, 2015). Further, leaders that become better listeners are inherently better at communicating with employees and supervisors. When leaders take the time to listen to employees, the act conveys a genuine concern for the well-being of subordinates. Additionally, the act of listening conveys respect and value to the communicator (Lloyd et al., 2015). However, there is an additional effect of leaders that employ actively listening: they learn a great deal. After all, listening to employees gives leaders an insight that is closer to the demands of end consumers (Lloyd, Boer, Keller, & Voelpel, 2015).

The current trend of flattening hierarchies makes listening even more critical for the success of organizations (Rao, 2014). This is due to leaders taking on more of a coaching role with direct reports. Also, modern leaders have to rely on collaboration with others to achieve results. In organizations that use multi-disciplinary teams, cooperation and collaboration are essential to efforts (Rao, 2014). In such environments, developing leaders to be better listeners has been found to enhance productivity and increase corporate profits. Rao (2014) posited the effect of listening can be attributed to increased motivation and efficiency.

Of the 20 participants included in the study, 17 (85%) referenced listening as a key to organizational success. A sample of participant statements that supports listening as a theme is as follows: “When my manager asks my opinion, I feel valued and I work harder to achieve my goals” (Participant 6). “It’s nice to have input when the company is looking to change direction” (Participant 7). “My DM listens to me. He really understands what makes me tick” (Participant 8).

Not only is it important for my boss to listen to me, I have to listen to my employees. I have a very veteran team that knows more about this business than I do. I have to allow them a voice to ensure my own success. (Participant 15)

My district manager really shines when she leads a manager meeting. She develops an agenda but gives all the managers equal time to talk about challenges and successes.

Many times, she spends less time talking than anyone. This may seem strange, but we work well as a team. She is always ranked as one of the top DM's in the region.

(Participant 19)

Over the years, I have found it necessary to always listen to my employees. It has taken me years to understand this. They are the ones that interact directly with the customers.

They have a perspective that I do not have. Without their input, this store would not function. They are the reason I succeed. (Participant 20)

The comments surrounding listening were largely positive. However, one participant did share some information regarding the negative results that occur when leaders fail to listen.

My boss is very focused on the district-making budget, so he can make his bonus.

Outside of that, I'm not sure he cares about what goes on. We are just a means to an end.

He never listens to what his managers have to say. Since he has been in charge, the district has gone downhill and a lot of good managers have left the company. I have been looking myself. (Participant 2)

Consistent with the findings of van den Heuvel, Freese, Schalk, and van Assen (2017), study participants indicated that leaders that listen positively influence employee engagement and commitment. In addition, study participants indicated engagement is enhanced when business leaders include their employees in the process of determining how best to address



opportunities and threats. Further, study participants indicated there are clear negative effects on engagement and commitment when leaders fail to listen to employees. This indication is also consistent with previous study findings of Strom, Sears, and Kelly (2013).

**Emergent theme 3: Communication.** Communication is the next theme that became apparent while conducting this study. Communication as a theme is consistent with the findings of Bakar and McCann (2015). As found by Fairhurst and Connaughton (2014), communication has the capability to drive job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee performance. In addition, Graen (2013) found that group behavior and organizational behavior is a function of all interaction among group members. It should be noted that communication is not limited to verbal in nature.

As it relates to organizational change, communication is critically important to the overall success of any initiative (Tanner & Otto, 2016). During times of change, employees should be made aware of the types of changes taking place, the reasons for the changes, what is expected of them, what the outcome of the initiatives will be, what it means for their jobs, and how they will be supported during and after the change initiatives (Campbell, Carmichael, & Naidoo, 2014). Without such attention to detail, employees are left to speculate the true nature of what is planned. This speculation leads to cynicism and resistance increasing the difficulty associated with change related tasks. In addition, resistance can sabotage change efforts to such a degree that all efforts fail (Tanner & Otto, 2016).

On a fundamental level, leaders use communication to coordinate activities, disseminate information, gain access to information, and motivate employees (O'Sullivan & Partridge, 2016). Communication can take many forms: verbal, written, email, text, non-verbal, and so forth (Nadim, 2015). Leaders must understand that effective communication must ensure the message

intended is the message that is received (Brewer & Holmes, 2016). When communication is not properly received, the results can be the same if not worse than failing to communicate altogether. Further, the use of electronic communication increases the probability that miscommunication will occur as there are fewer non-verbal cues that give insight to the overall meaning of the message. In such cases, leaders must take extra precautions to ensure that what is received is what was intended.

To be successful, organizational communication must be concrete and understandable by all employees (Touhidul & Sorooshian, 2018). This means that leaders must take care when crafting their message. Leaders must understand the channel chosen to communicate is as important as the message being communicated (Villa, Gonçalves, & Odong, 2017). For example, written communication can be perceived as flat and uninspiring. Finally, leaders must communicate with employees on a regular basis ensuring the message aligns with the strategic initiatives of the firm.

Of the 20 participants interviewed for this study, 15 (75%) discussed communication as important in interactions with their direct managers, their employees, and between employees within the store. A sample of supporting statements related to communication are as follows: “When I am confused about what needs to happen, it is helpful to talk things through with my manager” (Participant 4). “This store runs good because my employees work well with each other. They take the time to talk with each other to figure out the best way to complete a task or solve a problem” (Participant 11). “Sometimes, I find it helpful to call a fellow manager to run an idea by him. There are three managers that I regularly talk to get a different perspective” (Participant 6).

I practice an open-door policy with my team. Most of them have been here for a long time. They know they can talk to me about anything. One of my employees recently lost a child. While it was tough working through that with her, I am glad she felt comfortable enough to confide in me. Giving her that time, I had to. She is a great employee. This place would not be the same if she left. These are the kinds of things that you have to work through when you deal with people. (Participant 19)

I have been a part of teams that do not communicate well. It is not a fun place to be. Performance suffers. Even before I was a manager, I realized this. In stores that don't make budget, there seems to be an air of hostility. No one talks to each other in those places. (Participant 4)

The theme that communication has the ability to impact team performance is consistent with the findings of Brewer and Holmes (2016). In their research, Brewer and Holmes (2016) found that miscommunication had the ability to cause poor performance, a lack of motivation for employees, and resentment. Poor team performance hinders the ability to implement and sustain organizational change (Buyl, Boone, & Wade, 2015). Servant leadership supports and encourages effective communication among team members at all levels of the hierarchy (Gutierrez-Wirsching, Mayfield, Mayfield, & Wang, 2015).

**Emergent theme 4: Motivation.** Consistent with the findings of Jaiswal and Dhar (2017), servant leaders are extremely effective at motivating employees. Mertel and Brill (2015) found servant leadership to more effective at motivating employees than other forms of leadership. In fact, their research found that leaders who practice other forms of leadership could benefit from adopting key elements of servant leadership. Even when transactional and laissez-

faire leaders employ only a few of the principles of servant leadership, the outcome for leaders, followers, and the organization is positive (Mertel & Brill, 2015).

Servant leaders are people oriented; this orientation is positively correlated with motivating employees to go above and beyond what is typically required by the job (Jogulu, 2010). Further, Sabir, Sohail, and Khan (2011) opined that servant leaders work to align the organizational culture with their strategic vision. Doing so has been suggested to enhance employee engagement leading to increased performance. In organizations led by servant leaders, employees report greater sense of belonging further enhancing motivation (Budiyanto, & Oetomo, 2011). These same employees report an obligation to perform at high levels out of fear of disappointing their manager.

Ultimately, treating employees with respect, investing in them, and serving their needs has shown to improve organizational performance (Hunter et al., 2013). This should be of particular interest to organizations that are looking to increase performance and conserve resources. Motivation by way of servant leadership comes as a byproduct of regarding organizational initiatives as secondary to the needs of employees (Liden et al., 2014). Servant leaders compel employees to seek out heightened work fulfillment and engage in organizational learning. Finally, servant leaders cause employees to develop meaningful and trusting relationships with co-workers; it is through these relationships that servant leaders have the capacity to positively affect employees that report to other managers (Vanneste, Puranam, & Kretschmer, 2014).

Of the 20 participants in this study, 15 (75%) indicated Christian servant leadership enhances their level of motivation. In addition, of the 15 individuals that mention motivation, 10 participants (67%) indicated using the principles of servant leadership has positive effects on the

level of motivation for direct reports. A sample of supportive statements for the motivation theme follows. “When my DM supports me and does what I need, I immediately feel more inclined to work harder to accomplish company goals and meet his expectations” (Participant 4).

I believe that servant leadership is more rewarding and will encourage me as an individual to do more for that leader than if I work for a company that just has a numbers driven manager. It all goes back to motivating the individual. If you are just numbers driven, you lose sight of the individual. Sometimes I think that happens in larger corporations simply because of the size. (Participant 1)

All change is not necessarily for the best. But if you can buy into the why, then you can find your own motivation to do that. Change is not always easy. But there is always a bigger result in the end. So, for me, it has just been a cost of doing business. All organizations, the larger they become, the more change there will be. In the end, I feel way more motivated by leaders that support and serve me than the ones that are just looking to pad numbers for today. (Participant 7)

I have been in management for 25 years. I used to be a pretty heavy-handed manager. Employees that did not do what I said faced consequences and typically did not last long. But, over the years, my approach softened. I learned that I needed to support employees. This has led to employees that want to be here, want to work for me, and seem very motivated. The change in approach has helped my stress level too. (Participant 9)

I think it is simple. Most people don't want to work for a tyrant. In stores where the manager is a tyrant, employees are just there for a paycheck. They do the minimum to get by and never feel motivated to give 100%. They are looking for somewhere better. Who can blame them? Several of my employees have worked at other stores. They tell

me they are more motivated working in this type of atmosphere. I do everything I can to serve their needs first. (Participant 13).

I have noticed as the economy has gotten better and unemployment has dropped, it has become harder to find and keep motivated employees. They have options of where they want to work and who they want to work for. As a store manager, I have to do something to ensure they want to stay here. For me, that is leading through their service. I am fortunate because I don't think many managers in the parts business understands just how good Christian servant leadership is at developing and motivating crew members.

(Participant 14)

“Different people are motivated by different things. However, working for them gives me a better vantage point to figure out what drives them” (Participant 20).

Participants in this study indicated motivation can take many forms. However, regardless of the form, participants stated their experiences have shown that servant leadership is superior to other forms of leadership. These findings are consistent with research conducted by Gutierrez-Wirsching et al. (2015). However, it should be pointed out that store managers in this study indicated they were more motivated when working for servant leaders. Also, store managers found that servant leadership is more effective at motivating their employees. Motivation is particularly relevant to organizational change as Wright, Christensen, and Isett (2013) found a positive correlation between motivation levels and the likelihood that change efforts would succeed. That is, as motivation increases, so too does the effectiveness of change efforts.

**Emergent theme 5: Employee development.** When organizational change is necessary, it is important to ensure employees have the necessary skills to implement and sustain the

desired state of the firm (Shah, Irani, & Sharif, 2017). One way to ensure employees have the requisite skills is to support employee development through training initiatives (Ibrahim, Boerhannoeddin, & Bakare, 2017). However, employee development serves to accomplish more than just the development of new skills. According to Diamantidis and Chatzoglou (2014), employee development programs signal to employees the level of commitment the firm has for the individual. Servant leaders support employee development through formal training programs and informal, every day interactions (Akdol & Arikboga, 2017).

Employee development and training programs serve to align organizational capabilities with the nature of their market (Gwaka, Gidion, Mayianda, & Damarias, 2017). In an effort to continually expand their market, organizations must seek out new opportunities. However, these opportunities are rare. Organizations expand by way of two functions: in response to external threats or by changing the dynamics of the market. Regardless of the catalyst that causes organizational change, it is likely new employee skills will be needed (Anyieni & Kwamboka, 2015).

Training and professional development programs are critical to the success of organization change (Christofilos, DeMatteo, & Penciner, 2015). Employee development programs can also allow a firm to implement new technologies, increase efficiency, enhance productivity, and increase profits. Further, employee development programs allow firms to promote from within by developing current employees to take on new roles (Falola, Osibanjo, & Ibiyinka, 2014). Organizations reap a host of benefits when training employees to take on greater responsibility versus hiring from outside the company. For example, organizations that promote from within save money, have less training to do as the employee is already familiar with organizational processes, and employees tend to remain with the company longer.

Training and development programs also increase job enrichment for employees (Salau, Adeniji, & Oyewunmi, 2014). Job enrichment seeks to increase the fulfillment employees receive. This is done by enhancing the level of autonomy, an increase in skill variety, and redesigning jobs (Lam, Wan, & Roussin, 2016). Through the use of job enrichment programs, employees become more motivated, committed, and productive. Employers that use these programs enjoy lower cost, less turnover, and greater ease in hiring new employees.

Of the 20 participants that were interviewed as part of this study, 17 participants (85%) cited employee development as an important factor in servant leaders facilitating organizational change. A sample of participant statements that support employee development as a theme follows.

On a positive note, I have had some leaders that want to get to know me as an individual and just as stated in my leadership style, they try to discover what motivates me or what's my why for coming to work and putting in the efforts that I do. Those relationship have been more successful with personal development, growth, and satisfaction with the job. These managers have tended to take whatever time is necessary to make sure I succeed. (Participant 1)

My DM has taken the time to understand what I want out of my career. We meet regularly so we can review what needs to happen for me to meet the company's expectations. At the same time, he works with me, so I can achieve the goals I have for myself. I find I am more dedicated to the company and its goals when my manager helps me grow. (Participant 4)

Unlike other places I have worked, my District Manager is truly dedicated to my success. She works to develop my skills as a manager. Over time, I feel like I have gained a level



of understanding of what needs to happen. I feel like my DM trusts that I will do what is needed. She understands that if she works hard to develop me, it makes her job a bit easier. (Participant 17)

“My company offers an extensive optional training and development program. I try to take advantage of every course I can” (Participant 11). “The professional development program really lets me know the company values me” (Participant 13). “The training program is an investment in me” (Participant 15)

I started with the company right out of high school. In the beginning, I was part time. My manager back then saw that I was a hard worker. He worked with me and promoted me to management. Now that I am older and have a family to support, I like the fact this is the type of company that develops internal candidates for leadership positions. The company’s effort to develop me has kept me focused and causes me to be more dedicated. What started out as part time has become a 25 year and counting career. I’m glad my manager saw something in me all those years ago. I work hard to do the same for folks that I hire today. (Participant 20)

The concept that personal development leads to more committed and motivated employees is consistent with the findings of Keevy and Perumal (2014). Business leaders with well thought out career development plans seek out employers that offer professional development services (Keevy & Perumal, 2014). This fact relates back to Herzberg’s Motivation-Hygiene Theory as employee development programs enhance motivation (Gupta et al., 2013).

**Emergent theme 6: Commitment.** Commitment as a theme is supported by research completed by Miao, Newman, Schwarz, and Xu (2014). Servant leaders foster commitment in

two ways: servant leaders are committed to their employees and the employees of servant leaders are more committed to the organization as a whole (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018).

It must be recognized by leaders that organizational change can represent an extremely stressful time for employees. This stress is a source of resistance and works to undermine change initiatives (Straatmann, Nolte, & Seggewiss, 2018). A leader's level of commitment to employees can ease this stress thereby increasing commitment levels of front line employees, mitigating other negative effects of the change process, and increasing the propensity that change initiatives will be successful. Committed leaders understand the need for organizational change and cope with the difficulty ensuring success (Shin, Seo, Shapiro, & Taylor, 2015). In order to support change efforts, leaders must develop relationships, build trust with employees, and ensure satisfaction with and among employees.

A leader's attitude during change initiative can be the difference between success and failure (Suwaryo, Daryanto, & Maulana, 2015). When leaders communicate positive insights regarding organizational change, employees are less likely to resist initiatives. Further, leaders must support employees throughout the process.

Of the 20 participants interviewed for this study, 14 interviewees (70%) spoke about commitment as a factor. A sample of statements that supports commitment as a theme are as follows: "I know that my manager is committed to me, my employees, and my store" (Participant 11).

I have worked for DM's that were not committed to me. It was obvious I was a means to an end. I think being a female in the automotive aftermarket, you get the short end of the stick, per se. In some of those experiences, it has been somewhat condescending or degrading. (Participant 2)

My District Manager tells his managers he is committed to our success. But, he also shows it. Rather than be ultra-critical of things that need attention and work, he helps me. He does this for everyone that works for him. His level of commitment drives me to work harder at everything I do. (Participant 4)

Over the years, I have changed how I do things. I used to be a very hard-nosed manager. I demanded hard work from everyone. I wanted one thing: results. But, I have softened up over the years. I have come to understand that people don't like to be treated like machines. Every employee that comes to work here makes a commitment. They could just as easily work someplace else. I owe it to them to be committed to them. (Participant 8)

“I recently changed companies to stay with my DM because I know how committed he is to me and a job well done” (Participant 5).

Commitment from leaders is essential for the success of an organization (Valaei & Rezaei, 2016). When leaders demonstrate a high level of commitment to the organization and their employees, job satisfaction and performance increase (Culibrk, Delic, Mitrovic, & Culibrk, 2018). In turn, employers that demonstrate a high level of job satisfaction are more committed to the organization and its goals. In times of organizational change, this commitment translates into a greater opportunity for success (Top, Akdere, & Tarcan, 2015).

### **Unique Insights**

In addition to the six themes that emerged from the study, one participant shared a unique experience that was not found to be a theme germane to this study. Participant 12 stated the following: “I am not concerned with what style of leadership my DM uses. I can do my job regardless.” While the experiences of Participant 12 are unique as far as this study relates, there

are instances where leadership style is irrelevant (Ivanov, Belhassan, & Mahone, 2018). In fact, it is unique insights such as those shared by Participant 12 that legitimizes the use of phenomenology in a study such this (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

### **Summation of the Findings**

This study produced six emergent themes that demonstrates the efficacy of Christian servant leadership. The themes are as follows: empathy, listening, communication, motivation, employee development, and commitment. When considered together, these themes show that Christian centered servant leadership is an effective leadership method when employed to facilitate organizational change in the automotive aftermarket in the Triad region of North Carolina. This assessment of findings comes from cross-referencing the themes of this study with the leadership attributes that have been shown by other studies to be effective at facilitating organizational change (Savage-Austin & Honeycutt, 2011).

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

The findings of this study are useful to improve the understanding of business leaders. The overall applicability of these findings is shown in the Applicability section. In addition, the findings are discussed with respect to their relevance to improving business practice. Finally, the findings were reviewed with respect to the Biblical framework presented in Section One.

### **Applicability**

Determining the best form of leadership to drive organizational change is a highly desirable topic for business leaders. The type of leadership embraced has a direct impact on the implementation and sustainability of organizational initiatives (Mauri, 2017). In fact, when corporations employ the wrong leadership style, leadership has the capacity to hinder the ability to implement organizational change (Panaccio et al., 2015). This study provides

empirical evidence of the efficacy of Christian centered servant leadership in the automotive aftermarket.

Nenonen, Brodie, Storbacka, and Peters (2017) posited that business leaders can benefit from incorporating findings of academic research. The themes identified in the previous section provide business leaders and managers in the automotive aftermarket information on developing, implementing, and sustaining organizational change. Understanding these themes will help leaders determine how to use Christian servant leadership. In addition, these findings increase the existing body of knowledge on past research that has been performed on leadership style and organizational change.

Corporations have the ability to choose the types of leaders they want to run their store operations (Liden et al., 2014). As corporate leaders in the automotive aftermarket gain knowledge on the efficacy of Christian servant leadership and the overall need for organizational change, they can begin to recruit and develop individuals that embrace this type of leadership (Tschohl, 2017).

### **Biblical Implications**

Regarding the Biblical implications of this study, it is important to understand how leadership in business can be used to advance God's Kingdom. The practice of Christian servant leadership is as old as the teachings of the Bible. In fact, it was Jesus, the Son of God that first showed man the glories of serving the Father first while serving His fellow man. Nowhere is this more evident than the single act of Jesus washing the feet of His disciples.

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began

to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.  
(John 13: 3-5, NIV)

Jesus used this seemingly mundane act to set forth a mandate that man is to serve one another as a service to the Father. This precedent is further enforced by the following passage: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10: 45). Leaders that employ Christian servant leadership do more than just compel employees to become motivated and committed to organizational goals, they follow Jesus' mandate (Wilkes, 1998). Further, businesses that embrace Christian servant leadership are aligned with God's intent for work (Keller & Alsdorf, 2012).

Christian servant leaders have the added impact of introducing individuals to the miracles of Jesus (Hybels, 2012). By showing others the true servant nature of Christians, these leaders serve to influence the beliefs of others. Further, these leaders serve as living example that dispels many of the preconceived notions that non-believers may hold (Aihokhai, 2013). It is in these examples that new Christians are born.

Finally, Christian servant leaders fill the void that occurs in workplaces that are strictly secular (Ebert & Strehlow, 2017). Christian servant leaders in such venues increase commitment, enhance corporate social responsibility, and position their firms for long-term, sustainable success (Kriger & Seng, 2007). Business people that use Christian servant leadership base their decisions on what is best for employees, the organization, and society as a whole (Meng, 2016). It is by taking this approach that Christian servant leaders advance His Kingdom. These leaders understand that corporate profits, while important, are secondary to the true purposes of business: to create goods and services for society and allow Christians a platform to express their God given talents (Van Duzer, 2010).

### **Recommendations for Action**

Developing an organizational change plan involves considering a multitude of factors. The finding of this study could help business leaders that are faced with such a challenge. The researcher recommends that leaders in the automotive aftermarket use these study findings to strengthen their approach to organizational change through the style of leadership employed. Business leaders should consider the relevance of these findings and implement an organizational culture that supports Christian servant leadership.

The finding of this study impacts employees, managers, and leaders in the automotive aftermarket. As retailers in the automotive aftermarket embrace the need for change, it will become evident that continued fluidity and a culture that is predisposed to such a reality will result in longevity regardless of volatility (Vakola, 2013). In organizations that heed these warnings, stakeholders, both internal and external, will benefit as the firm will remain viable (Suwaryo et al., 2015).

The findings of this study can assist business leaders and managers when assessing the applicability of Christian servant leadership. Further, leaders can use these findings to develop strategies that install a servant culture within their firm. In order to disseminate these findings, organizations and leaders can use industry journals, workshops, and academic research journals. The researcher will work to publish this dissertation in various journals in an effort to increase its audience. In addition, a copy of the study findings will be provided to all participants.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

Limited research exists relating to Christian servant leadership in the automotive aftermarket. Recommendations for further study include focusing on reducing the limitations of this study. Namely, this study used a small sample size and a small geographic area. It is

possible that vast differences exist when comparing store managers in other parts of the United States. Further research could be done regarding the level of hierarchy within the organization. For example, this study was limited to front line retail store managers. Future study could focus on store employees or middle management leaders. In addition, this study was limited to store managers in chain retail stores such as Advance Auto, AutoZone, and O'Reilly Auto Parts. It seems reasonable large, corporate chains would function differently than more independent retailers. Future research could be conducted on these smaller, non-corporate locations.

Future researchers could employ a quantitative or mixed methods approach to this problem. Such a study would seek to rank factors from this study could allow business leaders to develop an optimal solution to leading an organization through the challenges of change and redesign. Additional findings arrived at through studies such as these would increase the overall body of information allowing for greater insight to business leaders in the automotive aftermarket.

Finally, this study and those that have been recommended thus far have focused on employees, managers, and leaders with the firm. Additional research could be performed to gain the perspective and insight of consumers that shop at store in this sector. Consumer perspective affects the direction of many firms. As such, consumer perception should be considered with respect to their insight in stores operated by Christian servant leaders versus other leadership styles.

## **Reflections**

This study involved exploring the lived experiences of 20 front line store managers in the automotive aftermarket in the Triad region of North Carolina regarding their perceptions and insights of Christian servant leadership's efficacy during times of organizational change. During



the data collection process, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with each participant. In addition, interviews were followed up with member checking to ensure accuracy of each transcript and the insight gleaned.

During the process, the researcher had an opportunity to interact with study participants and participate in insightful conversation. While most participants were interested in the process and participated without hesitation, several would be participants declined the opportunity to let their perceptions be known. Perspective participants that chose not to participate expressed concerns over confidentiality, cited various company policies that forbid their involvement in such studies, and generally feared the possibility of retribution.

Throughout his career, the researcher has had significant dealings with the automotive aftermarket. These dealings have been primarily as a consumer of these stores. The researcher understands such an involvement has the potential to create bias. However, the researcher did not use stores in his immediate area and employed the use of bracketing to limit the impact of such biases. Still, the possibility of countertransference was a concern for the researcher.

Prior to the beginning of the field study, the researcher had concerns that store managers in the automotive aftermarket would lack significant understanding and insight regarding Christian servant leadership. However, this concern was unfounded. In fact, the researcher found that many of the study participants were just as passionate about Christian servant leadership. For this researcher, this realization enhanced the overall meaning of this project.

Along this same line, the researcher was impressed by the love that most participants have for our Father God. Anecdotally speaking, it seems that much of what is publicized is how many people in the country have abandoned their faith. However, the researcher found that many of the participants in this study remain steadfast in their commitment to the Father. This

realization became evident in light of participants working with largely secular employers. This project alone has served to strengthen the researcher's faith. However, the realization that many of the participants in this study are faithful to God has served to ease many of researcher's fears that people in the United States have abandoned the church.

### **Summary and Study Conclusions**

The researcher designed and conducted this dissertation research study to examine the efficacy of Christian servant leadership in facilitating organizational change in the automotive aftermarket. The researcher designed interview questions, conducted, 20 face-to-face interviews, and analyzed data reducing the information to themes. Finally, the researcher made suggestions as to how this research could be furthered.

The finding of this doctoral project help to address the gap in the current body of literature regarding the efficacy of Christian servant leadership in facilitating organizational change in the automotive aftermarket. Prior studies completed on similar topics were focused on other industries, other sectors of retail, or failed to examine Christian servant leadership's ability to facilitate organizational change. The consensus of study participants is that Christian servant leadership has the ability to create an atmosphere that is conducive to organizational change. These findings are in line with previous studies in that Christian servant leadership is effective as a mode of leadership that positions firms for long-term viability (Bambale, 2014).

Business leaders and managers must understand that all forms of leadership are not equally effective in all situations. Certain types of leadership are better suited than others depending upon the particulars of a situation (Graham et al., 2015). To improve the opportunity to succeed, the leaders must review the current state and determine how best to proceed. While other forms of leadership have their time and place, Christian servant leadership is a very capable

type of leadership. This serves to display the capabilities of such a leadership style. The findings of this study are useful to leaders that seek to create long-term success within their organization. Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory, also known as the two-factor theory, served as the conceptual framework for this dissertation.

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### Appendix A: Participant Open-Ended Interview Questions

1. Please tell me a little about yourself. (Prompts: family, relationships, friends, likes and dislikes, life at college)
2. When did you first become a store manager in the automotive aftermarket?
3. Please describe your experiences with organizational change.
4. Please describe your experiences with Christian centered servant leadership.
5. Please describe your view on Christian centered servant leadership versus other types of leadership. (Prompts: transactional, transformational, autocratic, laissez faire)
6. Please describe your view on how leadership affects organizational change.
7. Do you feel that Christian centered servant leadership is more effective at facilitating organizational change when compared to other types of leadership? Why or why not?
8. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with Christian centered servant leadership or organizational change?