IMPACT OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP: EXPLORING THE TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP QUALITIES OF SELECTED SECONDARY AGRICULTURE TEACHERS

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IMPACT OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP: EXPLORING THE
TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP QUALITIES OF SELECTED SECONDARY
AGRICULTURE TEACHERS

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Career, Technical, and Leadership Education in
the College of Agriculture at the University of Kentucky

By
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Lexington, KY
2013

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

IMPACT OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP: EXPLORING THE TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP QUALITIES OF SELECTED SECONDARY AGRICULTURE TEACHERS

The purpose of this study is to determine if transformational leadership styles of agriculture teachers in Jessamine County has an impact on successful transitions of program completers. To be more specific, the focus was to look at agriculture teachers at Jessamine Career and Technology Center (JCTC) to see if they exhibit components of transformational leadership. If so, does transformational leadership of those teachers assist students with successful transitions after graduation? Successful transition is deemed by the Kentucky Department of Education as students that seek post-secondary education, employed full-time or enlist in a branch of armed services.

The population for this study consists of graduates from Jessamine County between the years of 2010-2012. All participants were program completers in the agriculture career major. All participants also meet the criteria of successfully transitioning.

The participants in the study indicated agriculture teachers at JCTC did exhibit all components of transformational leadership. Participants also indicated transformational leadership utilized by the agriculture teachers assisted them in successfully transitioning after high school. Relationships between participants and agriculture teachers at JCTC were an indicator of why transformational leadership was a successful leadership style of the agriculture teachers.

KEYWORDS: Transformational Leadership, Career Major, Program Completer, Successful Transition, Teacher/Student Relationship

Ryan H. Thomas
July 23, 2013
Date
IMPACT OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP: EXPLORING THE TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP QUALITIES OF SELECTED SECONDARY AGRICULTURE TEACHERS

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my family. My family is my entire world; my wife, Christina, my son, Barrett and my daughter, Molly. They are the reason that I continue to push myself professionally and I hope to set a good example for my children on how to work hard and always strive for more.

Christina – Thanks for your support in all of my endeavors. You have always been there for me and you have helped me to become a better person and teacher.
Many people have provided support and encouragement to me as I have worked to complete this study and degree. I couldn’t have done it without you.

To my wife Christina, thank you so much for your continued support. This has been long and frustrating journey but you have continued to be understanding and encouraging. You helped me through the stressful times and have provided assistance in so many ways. Picking up kids, taking care of household work, getting babysitters; all so that I could work to complete this study. Your help and support are greatly appreciated and you will never know how much I am grateful!

Dr. Stacy Vincent, over the course of my graduate studies I have had three advisors come and go. None of them were able to assist me with my completion of my Master’s degree as much as you have. You have made yourself extremely available and have sacrificed free time, vacation time and time away from your family. I am forever grateful for your willingness to help me through this process. I know that this should’ve been completed long ago, but you were still willing to offer assistance whenever I needed it. THANK YOU!!

Lastly, a big thank you goes to my co-workers and participants in this study. My colleagues have helped me think of ideas, find research articles and covered for me at various events so that I could work on my thesis. Matt, Mary and Christi, you all are me second family and I will always cherish the times we worked together. All participants in this study were great to work with and I truly appreciate their cooperation and participation.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Background and Setting

The educational system is continuously evolving to help students of our nation, state and local communities to become better prepared for their futures. At various stages in National and State levels, new sets of guidelines, standards, or accountability assessments come down the pipeline with a promise to expand student achievement. In the Commonwealth of Kentucky, educational reform legislation such as Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA), No Child Left Behind and College & Career Readiness all attempted to enhance the educational systems in our schools (www.education.kde.gov).

The Kentucky Department of Education’s (KDE) mission is to prepare all Kentucky students for next-generation learning, work and citizenship by engaging schools, districts, families and communities through excellent leadership, service and support (www.education.kde.gov). In an effort to fulfill its mission, KDE also mandates a set of minimum high school graduation requirements for the state. However, due to schedule varieties, different course offerings, and other restrictions, the total number of class credit requirements for graduation varies from high school to high school. For example, some students may graduate with thirty-two credits while others graduate with twenty-four. In other instances, school districts have differing requirements such as taking two years of a foreign language or making it a requirement to complete four elective credits in a career major for graduation.

In addition to national and state governments, and district boards of education, educational philosophies differ from one educator to the next (Sankey, 2011). No matter the
changes or differences, all of these players in education have one major premise; to help students succeed in school and ultimately their transition into adult life.

After thirteen years of classroom instruction, hundreds of homework assignments and tests, extracurricular activities, sports and everything else that goes into a student’s school experience; the hope is that all high school graduates find a career they enjoy and can be successful in. Webster defines success as “favorable or desired outcome”. However, the reality is that not all students are going to be successful. Some may drop out. Some may end up in a correctional facility. Some may struggle with drug and alcohol abuse.

According to Bangser (2008), nationally, almost 30% of students do not graduate from high school with a regular diploma and many decide to combine work with various forms of postsecondary education; therefore, whatever specific paths these graduates pursue it is increasingly clear that the skills needed for work often mirror those required for admission to and success in postsecondary education. Hopefully the school’s students graduated from have prepared them for the road that lies ahead.

Following graduation, students are faced with a plethora of decisions for successful transition. The Kentucky Department of Education: Career and Technical Education Division defines successful transition as follows:

1. Further his/her education at a post-secondary institution.

2. Begin employment as an entrepreneur or fulltime employee.

3. Enlist with an armed service provider.
Successful transition (as defined above) is one of the goals of Kentucky's educational system. The percentage of students making successful transition is a component of the high school accountability index. Kentucky educational statistics through the range of this study (2010-2012) show that an average of 93.7% of high school graduates in Kentucky were considered successful in their transition to life after graduation (Transitions Rate Spreadsheet, education.kde.gov).

Recent research suggests that participation in extracurricular activities may increase students' sense of engagement or attachment to their school, and thereby decrease the likelihood of school failure and dropping out (Finn, 1993; Lamborn et al, 1992). Additional research supports that a teacher and the school environment is also accredited for the success of a student (Osterman, 2000). However, these studies are limited in their observations and implementations, thus the reason for the continued failure of a small population of students at the secondary level. Henceforth lies the question, how do graduates from a suburban Kentucky school district, have a higher than norm result of students successfully transitioning after graduation, 94.8%, during that same time?

**Background Location of Research Study**

Jessamine County, Kentucky, population near 50,000 is located in the heart of Bluegrass Region in central Kentucky. The size of Jessamine County is 172 square miles and has a medium household income of $48,000. Eighty-seven percent of Jessamine County citizens have graduated from high school while twenty-seven percent of those have gone on to earn a bachelor’s degree or higher. There are 995 nonfarm businesses in Jessamine County Some of the larger employers in the county are the Jessamine County School District, RJ Corman Railroad, Alltec and Rock Ten. (US Census Bureau, 2010).
Jessamine County consists of two secondary schools, East Jessamine High and West Jessamine High each with enrollments of approximately 1,100 students. Jessamine Career and Technology Center (JCTC), a branch of the secondary training, services high school students in the district by offering an array of Career and Technical Educational (CTE) courses to high school students. Jessamine County students are required to complete a career major for graduation. In the 2011-2012 school year, JCTC had a total enrollment of 3,743 students (duplicate students counted). The programs at JCTC include; Agriculture, Advanced Placement, Biomedical Science, Business/Marketing, Career Options, Engineering, Health Science, Human Services, Information Technology, Public Safety, Foreign Language and College and Career Readiness (a program of studies designed to prepare students for post-secondary education or future jobs). The purpose of this study is to further examine the Agricultural Education department. This department is the largest at JCTC. During the 2011-2012 academic year the Agricultural Education department had an enrollment of nearly 675 students (duplicate students included). During this particular school year the agriculture department had four teachers. Each teacher taught four classes per day for seventy-five minutes, all classes were a semester long except those that were duel credit. Meaning they could count as an agriculture class and a core class. The majority of students in class were freshman, followed by seniors, sophomores and the lowest enrollment was juniors. These numbers are similar to enrollment numbers throughout the study.

At JCTC there are twenty-two agriculture courses that students can enroll in. These classes are categorized by a particular career major. A career major is the specific set of classes that a student takes to be a completer. For example, of the twenty-two agriculture classes that students can take, those twenty-two classes can be divided into eight career majors. Those
majors are; Animal Science Systems, Agri-Biotechnology, Horticulture and Plant Sciences, Food Science and Processing Systems, Agriculture Education, Communication and Leadership, Agribusiness, Agricultural Power, Structural and Technical Systems and lastly Environmental Science and Natural Resources Systems. Each of the eight majors has a specific set of required classes that must be taken in order to be a completer in that area.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study was based on Bernard Bass’ theory of transformational leadership (1985). The transformational leadership theory focuses on the connections formed between leaders and followers. The purpose is to focus on the extent to which a leader is transformational, and is measured in terms of his/her influence on the followers. The followers of such a leader feel trust, admiration, loyalty and respect for the leader and are therefore willing to work harder, relative to leaders possessing other styles of leadership. These outcomes occur because the transformational leader offers followers something more than just working for self-gain; they provide followers with an inspiring mission and vision and give them an identity. The leader transforms and motivates followers through one of four means: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration (Bass & Avolio, 1990).

**Statement of the Problem**

Students that are completers in a career major gain the opportunities to pursue higher education in any of these areas. There are several associates, bachelors, masters and even doctorate degrees that students can earn in these areas. If students do not wish to pursue the avenue of post-secondary education, they may select employment as a route in the career major areas or a branch of the armed services. There have been several studies that have
reported a positive influence of how a teacher’s leadership can affect the successes of students. The focus of this study is to determine specifically how does transformational leadership affects those students. Specifically, the researcher would find it beneficial to know how the teachers in the agriculture department at JCTC can contribute to successful transition of program completers. Any findings could benefits future students in the program.

**Need for the Study**

Educators have an extreme responsibility to prepare students to be contributing members of society. Schools and students are often evaluated on how well they prepare or are prepared for life after high school. There are standardized tests, benchmarks to be met and other common assessments that students and schools must adhere to.

Teachers spend countless hours preparing lessons and assessments, gathering materials, completing paperwork, attending professional developments and more; in order to make sure that they provide students the absolute best opportunity to succeed. However, what is the key component for assisting students to successfully transition? The researcher personally desires to understand what the JCTC department, more specifically, himself, does in order to result in positive transition following graduation.

**Purpose of the Study / Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to explore the dynamic of the JCTC Agricultural Education department. More specifically, the techniques, skills and methods that prepare the program completers for successful transition after graduation. In order to obtain the purpose of the study, the following research questions were developed.
1. How do JCTC agricultural education teachers develop relationships with the program completers in a manner that supports a successful transition?

2. What teaching methods and leadership methods do teachers of JCTC agricultural education department exhibit that promote successful transition among program completers?

3. Do JCTC agriculture teachers exhibit the four components of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration, to program completers?

**Definitions of Terms**

The following terms will be utilized throughout the study and should help provide assistance for those unfamiliar.

Program Completer – a student who has taken and passed four elective credits in a particular career major sequence.

The National FFA Organization (FFA) – A student organization whose mission is to make a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.

Career Major – a program of studies for a particular elective area.

**Limitations of the Study**

The following are limitations to this study:

1. The group of students of this study is limited to the graduates of Jessamine County’s Agricultural Education Department during the academic years of 2010-2012.

2. Only the students that were completers in the agriculture career majors were selected.
3. The ability to find all and survey all students in this study would be too extensive, so only a select, random group were chosen.

4. Conclusions, implications, and recommendations are limited to the agricultural education department at Jessamine County Technical Center.

**Basic Assumptions**

The following can be assumed in regards to this study.

1. Students that were completers in the agriculture career major had an interest in the subject matter.

2. All students graduated in good standing while meeting all guidelines and requirements set by the Jessamine County public school system.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Transactional and Transformational Leadership

The amount of theories on leadership is seemingly endless. New theories are being developed and current theories modified constantly. In 1978, James MacGregor Burns first described transforming leadership in his book entitled Leadership, written about the psychological, social, and political dimensions of leadership. According to Burns, “One of the serious failures in the study of leadership has been the bifurcation between the literature on leadership and the literature on followership.” (p. 3) In this book he combined these two literatures and identified two basic types of leadership: the transactional and the transforming. Transactional leadership is when leaders approach followers with the mind set of exchanging one thing for another. If followers are deemed successful in their work they are rewarded, if they are deemed unsuccessful, they are punished. He states that the majority of leader-follower relationships are of this type.

In contrast, he described transforming leadership, though used in fewer leader-follower relationships, as the more powerful of the two. The transforming leader recognizes the needs of the follower and uses that as the means of leading them. Burns states in an interview with Ron Brandt (1979), that these concepts are partially based on the work of Maslow where, “as fundamental needs are satisfied that higher needs are developed” (p. 384). Within this context of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, transactional leadership works from the basic levels of need and transforming leadership works from the higher levels of need.
In 1985, Bernard M. Bass expanded the work of Burns (1978) by replacing the term "transforming" with the term “transformational” and more importantly explaining the psychological mechanisms that underlie transforming and transactional leadership. Bass (1999) refers to transactional leadership as “the exchange relationship between leader and follower to meet their own self-interests” (p. 11), whereas he refers to transformational leadership as “the leader moving the follower beyond immediate self-interests” through influence and inspiration which elevates the flowers maturity. (p. 12)

In addition, Bass developed an empirical means of supporting the theories through creation of, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). The MLQ assists in explaining that leaders do not just work from either a transactional or transformational standpoint, but leaders fall along a continuum (Avolio, 1999). Bass (1999) further illustrated his reasoning for the MLQ when he stated, “if you can’t measure it, you don’t know what you are talking about.” (p. 18)

**Transformational Leadership Components**

Though leaders can perform on a continuum, the two theories can be described/applied independently of one another. Transformational leadership adds to the effectiveness of transactional leadership; it does not substitute for (Bass, 1999). As summarized by Boerner, Eisenbeiss & Griesser (2007), Bass identified four components of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. Ideal Influence: leaders are admired, respected and trusted, and followers want to emulate their leaders. Inspirational Motivation: leaders motivate their followers by providing meaning and challenge to their work, encourage them to envision the future as something more, and therefore boost enthusiasm and optimism. Intellectual Stimulation: leaders stimulate
followers by questioning assumptions, and approaching problems and situations in new ways. Individualized Consideration: leaders pay attention to individual followers needs and successfully develop them more highly.

**Table 1. Dimensions of Transformational Leaders (Bass & Avolio, 1990)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Idealized Influence (II)</td>
<td>Making others feel good, making others proud, earning faith from the subordinate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational Motivation (IM)</td>
<td>Leader communicates his/her goals, the manipulation of images, helping others find meaning in their work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Stimulation (IS)</td>
<td>Leader’s ability to make others think about new ways to perform work, new ways to look at work, ways to be creative in their own problem-solving methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Consideration (IC)</td>
<td>Individuals develop themselves, leader feedback to subordinates, time taken by the leader to bring workers into the team or group</td>
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**Transformational Leadership in Society**

“There is universality in the transactional-transformational leadership paradigm”, states Bass (1997, p. 130). In this article from the journal the *American Psychologist*, Bass summarizes the universality to this model, through evidence gathered from business, education, military, government and independent sectors, on all but one continent. He defends his universality argument by seven means. One: leadership itself is a universal phenomenon, two: leaders are developed from both heredity and influence, three: time has developed the need for more transformational leadership, four: social morality is influential, five: the paradigm can be used to compare similarities as well as differences in/of groups, six: technology has created a global
effect in that cultures can more easily interact and seven: the United States sets the tone globally from language to business.

In 2003, Scott E. Bryant conducted research on these theories, as they relate specifically to organizational knowledge, and concluded that transformational leadership may be more effective when creating and sharing knowledge at the individual and group levels, while transactional leadership may be more effective at exploiting knowledge at the organizational level. According to Bryant, it is the leader’s ability to manage knowledge effectively that can provide sustainable competitive advantage, because leaders provide the vision, motivation, systems and structure to the organization.

With the endemic interest of leadership in today’s society, stories of leadership (both successes and failures) flood the internet, television and social media outlets. These stories are primarily in relation to national politicians, CEOs of business and industry, directors of health care agencies and military leaders (Bass & Riggio, 2006). With leadership gaining exposure in these various segments of society, should one assume that education is also to be impacted?

**Transformational Leadership in Education**

Although few studies have been conducted specifically regarding such leadership in schools, evidence shows that there are similarities in transformational leadership whether in business or political setting or in education (Liontos, 1993). Ron Brandt writes about his interview with James MacGregor Burns where he himself makes the connection between his research on leadership and education. “I’m interested in what happens when leaders—in this case teachers—deal with followers (students) in such a way as to help raise them through higher and higher stages of self-realization” (1979, p 384).
There really are two major leader-follower relationships in a school setting; principal-teacher and teacher-student. In the early 90s there was a major shift in thinking of the role of school leaders (principals) and at what capacity they were to lead their schools. Liontos (1993) writes that, instructional leadership is out and transformational leadership is in, in regards to comprehensive school improvement. Kenneth Leithwood also writes of such changes in thinking, “instructional leadership is an idea that has served many schools well throughout the 1980s and the early 1990s” but in order to take schools into the 21st century, transformational leadership is where the new focus should be. (1992, p. 8)

Early research on transformational leadership in schools suggests that school leaders utilizing these leadership principles pursue three common fundamental goals: 1) helping staff members develop and maintain a collaborative, professional school culture, 2) fostering teacher development; and 3) helping them solve problems together more effectively. And though the research in this area is limited, the researchers found transformational leadership utilized in schools by principals to be uniformly positive. (Leithwood, 1992)

Burns in his interview with Brandt (1979), as referenced earlier, also proposes that if school leaders model transformational leadership, they can in effect, produce leaders among their teachers. Teachers can then utilize these thoughts in their classrooms in order to respond to students on a personal level by taking time to understand them as individuals. Leadership in the classroom then becomes an engagement between leader (teacher) and follower (student) as opposed to the former more authoritarian form of leadership. Burns clarifies himself too in stating that though it is an engagement, the teacher is still the leader. Support of similar findings, occurred in 2000, as Leithwood determined strong significant effects of such leadership on organizational conditions, and moderate, but still significant, total effects on student engagement.
Adding to this snow ball effect of modeling from principal to teacher, then from teacher to student, is also the aspect of student to workforce. Richard Carter (1989) referenced John P. Kotter as saying that “the need for leadership is becoming a crisis in the business sector of America.” He further claimed that students can complete graduate school without learning anything about leading people. Carter’s research study was on the most effective means of training future leaders through youth organizations such as 4-H, FFA and Boys Scouts of America.

**Transformational Leadership in Agricultural Education**

Leadership development is a fundamental component of Agricultural Education and has been since its inception. The mission of the FFA through agriculture education is to make a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success. Instruction in Agricultural Education is delivered through three major components: 1) classroom/laboratory instruction, 2) supervised agricultural experience programs and 3) student leadership organizations. (National FFA Organization)

Much research has been conducted to support the leadership development of students through Agricultural Education. In 1984, S. Clifton Ricketts conducted a study which concluded that Agricultural Education students/FFA members of the target population in Middle Tennessee, possessed significantly more leadership and personal development abilities that their non-vocational agriculture counterparts. (p 58) Additionally, a study conducted in 2007 about the history of leadership development through membership in the FFA, concluded that to date, FFA is continuing to provide subject matter and opportunities in leadership development to meet the needs of the twenty-first century (Hoover, Scholl, Dunigan, & Mamontova, 2007).
Carter (1989) states that, “The quality of agricultural programs can only improve with the quality of the leadership provided.” (p.30) If this assumption is indeed correct, then it is important that it be determined what form of teacher leadership is most effective for student leadership development. Though there is no evidence of one supreme leadership theory, ample research and teachings have been conducted on the ideals of Transformational Leadership, that it seemed appropriate to look into its effects in Agricultural Education.

In 2009, Bradley Greiman, Associate Professor at the University of Minnesota, conducted a research study to bring attention to this ideal of the potential effects that transformational leadership could have on the field of Agricultural Education. He discovered that research on transformational leadership in agricultural education was minimal, yet the publication of recent articles supported that this was an emerging area of research.

Based on this analysis and the previous studies, there is a need for research on the impact of transformational leadership of Agricultural Education teachers on student successes. Therefore, the question for this research study isn’t about Does Agricultural Education produce leaders?, rather Does transformational leadership style of Agricultural Education teachers affect success of students after high school?
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The following chapter discusses the methodology used in the study. An explanation of the research design, population and sample, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis is provided.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the dynamic of the JCTC Agricultural Education department. More specifically, the techniques, skills and methods that prepare the program completers for successful transition after graduation. In order to obtain the purpose of the study, the following research questions were developed.

Research Design

This study was descriptive and qualitative by design. According to Jacob (1988) qualitative research is a generic term for investigative methodologies described as ethnographic, naturalistic, anthropological, field, or participant observer research (p 16). It emphasizes the importance of looking at variables in the natural setting in which they are found. Interaction between variables is important. Detailed data is gathered through open ended questions that provide direct quotations. The interviewer is an integral part of the investigation.

Successfully transitioned students, for the purpose of this study, were identified as those: a) pursuing a post-secondary education; b) employed fulltime or as an entrepreneur in the workforce; and/or c) enlisted in a branch of the armed services, as defined by Kentucky Department of Education’s Career and Technical Education Department. Only these groups of students were concentrated on for this study. The forty-eight students that fell into other categories were not considered successful for the purpose of this research. Furthermore, no other variables were taken into account; student gender, age, socioeconomic status, religion, family
dynamic, and extracurricular activities were not considered pertinent in the overall design of the research conducted.

**Population and Sample**

The Judgment sampling technique (Marshall, 1996) was used to determine the population frame for this research study. According to this sampling approach, a researcher should actively select the most productive sample to answer the research question, based on practical knowledge and evidence available (Marshall, 1996). Based on this fundamental technique, the population was determined as follows.

The researcher’s employment in the Jessamine County School District began in 2006; therefore data analysis consisted of graduates four years later: 2010 through 2012. A report from the Technical Education Database System (TEDS) was retrieved for the complete list of all completers in the agriculture career majors during the time frame.

Only those students that were career major completers, of the eight career majors offered, were chosen for the study. The data of the non-completer students was not deemed sufficient due to lack of interaction/involvement with the agriculture instructors. Since some courses count towards various career majors, it is possible for a student to complete multiple majors. In 2010 there were thirty-six completers, in 2011 there were thirty-seven and in 2012 there were thirty-three completers, duplicates were included for all three years. The duplicated number of completers (N = 106) was then filtered to non-duplicates (N = 84).

In order to track the successful transition of each student, TEDS also keeps track of students after graduation. It is required that all completers have follow-up letters completed on them one year after graduation. These letters are usually completed by teachers of the programs of which those students completed for graduation. Therefore, students that were deemed a
completer of a career major was contacted to determine their transition status. There were thirty six students that had letters completed listing them as successful transitions. Those thirty six were then numbered. Eight random numbers were then drawn. Those students were then contacted about participating in the study. If a student was not able to be reached or refused to participate, other numbers were randomly drawn until eight participants were confirmed. An appropriate sample size is one that adequately answers the research question (Marshall, 1996).

Based upon a selection guideline (previously determined), a selection of 8 participants were randomly drawn, which represent 10% of the overall qualified completers ($n = 8$) who met the successful transition criterion.

**Interview Protocol**

To contact the students, TEDS data provided the last reported contact information of each participant. Initial contact was made via phone to schedule a time to conduct an interview. Some of the participant’s contact information was no longer available; therefore other means were used to make contact. In a society that is highly influenced by social media, Facebook and/or Twitter, was also utilized. Once contact was made, proper telephone numbers were exchanged and a date and time were scheduled for the interview

Though times varied, all efforts were made to ensure that each interview was prompt. Considering that responses and personalities are difficult to interpret through text and there could be undertones and expressions that are given in a conversation that may go unnoticed in a written response, as opposed to a verbal response, it was determined by the researcher to conduct all interviews orally (Polkinghorne, 2005). All interviews were conducted over the phone and audio recorded. In addition, the researcher maintained field notes and a reflective journal.
The questions in the interview were constructed so that the researcher would be able to make a connection between the transformational leadership of the teacher and the successes of students after high school. Questions were constructed so that it is clear whether or not there is any evidence of a connection. If the teacher had exhibited any of the traits of a transformational leader then the responses of the interviewee will be evident.

To help assist in the reliability of this study students are asked a series of questions that pertain to their success and to the leadership style of the agriculture teachers at JCTC. Some of these questions may be entirely dedicated to their successes, or entirely to the leadership style. Follow-up questions will then attempt to bring a connection between the two if there is in fact a connection.

**Researcher and Researcher Bias**

The researcher has been certified to teach agriculture since 2006. He has been employed by the Jessamine County Board of Education as a high school agriculture instructor since July 10, 2006. During this time the researcher has taught a plethora of classes that include courses in all of the eight career majors offered by the agriculture department at JCTC. Therefore a high possibility existed that the researcher would have participants that would have had him as their teacher.

Agriculture classes at JCTC are elective classes. While it is a requirement to complete four classes in a career major, the students have the ultimate decisions as to what career major they can complete. Therefore, students that have been completers in the agriculture pathway would be students that decided to take those classes and have an interest in the subject matter. Since all participants interviewed were students that spent at least four classes in the program, if not more, there is already a positive rapport formed with the participants and the researcher as
well as the other agriculture instructors at JCTC. The researcher has taken a mental stance not to be biased and ensure equality in all responses. To assist in checking that bias is removed, the researcher used the Bracketing method. Bracketing refers to the identification of the researcher’s vested interest in personal experience, cultural factors, assumptions and hunches that could influence how he or she views the study’s data (Fischer, 2009). Even though the researcher may have a relationship with participants, all questions and responses were asked and recorded the same for all.

**Data Collection**

The research methodology utilized in this study was qualitative and descriptive. A descriptive qualitative study is one that includes quotations from the participants to explain or describe a particular situation or view (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007). When collecting descriptive data “nothing is trivial and everything has the potential to be a clue that might unlock a more comprehensive understanding of what is being studied” (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007, p. 5). The method of gathering data from the participants was through an interview process utilizing open-ended questions. All interviews for this study were conducted over the phone. A Semi-Structured method of interview was used, where an initial set of thirteen questions was used (see Appendix A), and follow-up questions were asked to help allow the interviewer to diverge in order to pursue an idea or response in more detail (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). The follow-up questions varied from person to person as needed for each participant to further clarify their answers as needed. These follow up questions were asked as needed for data saturation, once this was achieved, the interviews were ended (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007). All data for this study was solely based off responses from student interviews. All of the interviews were conducted within a two-day period in order for responses to remain relevant.
Trustworthiness

According to Guba (as cited in Shenton, 2004), there are four constructs to follow in order to establish trustworthiness in qualitative research: a) credibility, b) transferability, c) dependability and d) confirmability.

Credibility was established throughout the research process by use of well adopted research methods from initial development of questions, random participant sampling, and participant preparation, to data collection and analysis procedures. Prior to each interview, the participants were informed of the study details and purpose, along with the ethicality assurances (anonymity and confidentiality to readers) (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). This was done so that participants knew what to expect from the interview and allow them to feel comfortable to give honest answers during the interview process.

External validity thus transferability (Shenton, 2004) was also established and boundaries of the research conveyed. Boundaries of the research include the previously mentioned number of participants, potential bias of the researcher and other limitations of the research as identified in Chapter I.

Dependability was developed through operational data gathering. During each interview the interviewer scribed all responses from the participants as they answered each question. Additionally, to make sure that no response went undocumented, every interview was recorded on an audio recorder and then transcribed to a word processing program where all participants’ names were then removed and an alias name was substituted. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim afterwards, as this protects against bias and provides a permanent record of what was and was not said (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008, p 293). This allowed the interviewer to go back and listen to each response from every interview to make sure
every answer was recorded and properly documented (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). Permission to record was requested at the beginning of each interview.

At the conclusion of the interview, interviewees were asked if they were content with their answers and had anything they wanted to add. This gave participants an opportunity to bring forth any information that came to mind, that was not brought to attention by the interviewer (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick 2008). Lastly, a follow-up phone call was made for final content validation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Finally, an audit trail was developed to create confirmability for the research study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The audit trail began with study development based on literature reviews on similar studies, followed by question development based on those findings. Next, population sampling was conducted that included a random selection of participants from 2010-2012 career major completers. This was followed by audio recorded and transcribed interview of participants. Finally, data was analyzed through coding, both open and axial.

**Data Analysis**

After complete transcription, data from this case study was analyzed through a series of coding strategies, beginning with the grounded theory method of open coding (Glaser 1998). This process began with identifying substantive codes as they emerged while analyzing data, line by line. The researcher looked for repeating trends and themes. As these trends emerged, they were coded accordingly. Once completed, the codes were then axial coded, as was defined in 1990 by Strauss and Corbin as “a set of procedures whereby date are put back together in new ways after open coding” (p 96). In order to complete task of axial coding, the researcher made connections between thematic open coded categories and related the research questions to develop research assertions.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Purpose of the Study / Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to explore the dynamic of the JCTC Agricultural Education department. More specifically, the techniques, skills and methods that prepare the program completers for successful transition after graduation. In order to obtain the purpose of the study, the following research questions were developed.

1. How do JCTC agricultural education teachers develop relationships with the program completers in a manner that supports a successful transition?
2. What teaching methods and leadership methods do teachers of JCTC agricultural education department exhibit that promote successful transition among program completers?
3. Do JCTC agriculture teachers exhibit the four components of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration, to program completers?
Findings

**Research Question 1: How do JCTC Agricultural Education teachers develop relationships with the program completers in a manner that supports a successful transition?**

Research question number one sought to find how the relationships were made with the teachers and students at JCTC and how the relationships helped those students to transition successfully after graduation. The first process was to look at responses from participants that gave details as to how those relationships were formed. After following the steps outlined in chapter three for coding, both open and axial, three themes to this question arose: 1) teacher willingness to help in various magnitudes, 2) extended time beyond regular school day, and 3) connection to the teacher who introduced them to the program.

1. Teachers’ willingness to assist at any time in various magnitudes.

Over the course of the interviews it was apparent that one constant answer kept appearing from the participants. Student participants found it easy to receive assistance from their three agriculture teachers. Participant number one stated that “all of the agriculture teachers were super approachable and always there for you. They stood behind their students.” This assistance did not always come in the form of just helping with curriculum in the classroom. Participant number eight stated that “the agriculture teachers were helpful in all ways.”

When asked to provide an example of how the agriculture teachers were helpful participant number five said “When I needed help getting a job at the Equine farm at Asbury she helped me fill out my application and also called some people she knew had connections with Asbury to help get me a job there.” Another participant gave this as an example. “My brother was president when he was in FFA. I wanted to have the success he had but I didn’t want to do everything like him. When I needed to start my SAE, you were really helpful in getting my SAE
started. You helped me get my plants, came out to visit several times during the summer and helped me find buyers for my vegetables.” These are two prime examples of how teachers were able to assist students in multiple magnitudes. Both were situations not related to time spent in class and showcased that the agriculture teachers were helpful to their students in accomplishing tasks.

Through the coding process, this theme appeared in several answers from the participants. The particular codes used by the students were: helpful, willing to help, and always there for me. As follow up questions were asked to know why or how were the teachers so “helpful”, other codes emerged in several responses; trustworthy and friendly. Participant number two stated that “the agriculture teachers were very trusting people in general.”

In several responses from the participants, their responses often mentioned that the agriculture teachers at JCTC were always helpful and the reason that students felt they could go to the agriculture teachers for assistance was because they seemed trustworthy. The theme that developed from these codes was teachers in the JCTC agriculture department were helpful to their students in various ways and the reason that students felt so was because of the trustworthiness that those teachers had.

2. Extending their time beyond the normal work schedule.

Another theme that developed as to how teachers were able to create relationships with students was that the youth organization, FFA, played an important role in many students’ lives within the agriculture department. Since participants in this study were students that had spent at least four classes in the agriculture department, those students obviously had an interest in the curriculum of agriculture. One of the intra-curricular parts of agriculture education is that of FFA. FFA is a great avenue for students to be successful in and out of the classroom. Many
times the instruction taught in the classroom lends itself to be pursued outside of the classroom in the ways of competitions, conventions and leadership opportunities. Participant number four stated that “staying after school so many times for Junior Parli practice helped form relationships with all of us.” The participant went on to say that “you (the teacher) were always cutting up with us and we always had fun. It wasn’t like sitting in class. We were able to talk about stuff that didn’t have anything to do with class. It didn’t matter if it was UK basketball or deer hunting. I think one of the reasons I liked you at first was because I love hunting and I thought it was cool that my teacher would talk about hunting with me. No other teacher ever did that.” This is a prime example of how students that spend time with teachers outside of the classroom, see teachers as people and not just a teacher.

Many participants expressed they felt closer to their agriculture teachers than any other teachers in their entire educational career. Participants gave responses that made mention of teachers feeling like family; different from other high school teachers and friendly. Participant number five stated that “FFA camp was when I started to feel like the teachers were like family members. Everything we did at camp ya’ll were always there making it fun. Even like chapter hours, you all would always do the games and stuff that all the kids did. Also at waterball and volleyball you all were always there trying to help cheer everyone on. I really didn’t want to go to camp but I wanted to be on the exec. team and my parents wouldn’t let me stay home.” This is another example of how the agriculture teachers were able to make connections with students outside of the classroom.

It is during time spent outside of classroom that the participants felt they really got to know their agriculture teachers. Many students listed going to the National FFA Convention, FFA Camp (both overnight trips) and staying after school to practice for various competitions as
reasons their relationship was stronger with that of their agriculture teacher than most other teachers.

3. Connection to the teacher who introduced them to the program

Principles of Agriculture class is an introductory class that covers a broad range of agricultural topics. This course is primarily taught to freshman and sophomores. For most agriculture students, this is the first agriculture class they would have taken in middle or high school.

Classes that primarily consist of underclassmen students lend themselves to having a different dynamic. These classes are often times filled with students that have never had a high school class before, yet alone an agriculture class. Participants related their experiences in their Principles of Agriculture class as being why they became involved in further agriculture classes, FFA and developed a respect and relationship with their teacher. Participant number two stated that “I remember it like it was yesterday. My Principles of Agriculture class was first period of the first semester of high school. I just remember thinking that he (the teacher) is so fun and it made me excited to be in the class and really want to be a part of FFA. It made me respect the teacher.” This participant was able to relate her relationship she had made with her agriculture teacher, to her first experience with that teacher in her freshmen agriculture class.

When participants were asked to follow up as to why that particular course lead to a relationship with the teacher, the two most common responses were the teacher was enthusiastic and passionate. It was discovered the enthusiasm displayed by the agriculture teachers had a positive effect on student’s participation in and out of the agriculture class. Participant number four stated “All the kids in our Principles class wanted to do good because learning in that class was fun. Everyone in class wanted to do good.” Participants also made mention that the passion
of the teachers in the classroom also made them feel more comfortable to participate. Numerous students made note that had it not been for that Principles of Agriculture class, they may have never become involved in FFA, completed the agriculture career major, or gained the leadership skills they currently have.

**Research Question 2: What teaching methods and leadership techniques do the teachers of JCTC Agricultural Education department exhibit that promote successful transition among program completers?**

Research question number two sought to find what teaching methods and leadership techniques were used by the agriculture teachers to encourage successful transition of the students of their program. Various methods were discovered/apparent as to exactly how the agriculture teachers were able to develop and encourage characteristics for successful transition among their students.

1. **Teacher maintained a welcoming classroom environment.**

   Participant number three stated that “classes were educational and didn’t feel like a required class, interesting.” Teaching strategies and classroom management of the agriculture teachers lead to an atmosphere in the class that fostered student learning and achievement as well as a classroom that was inviting and fun to be a part of. Participant number eight stated that “the teaching styles of the agriculture teachers were organized but kind of laid back.” Many participants proposed that the relationship with the agriculture instructor was stronger than that of other teachers because of how the agriculture teacher taught and handled students in the classroom.

   One way mentioned by a participant, was the teacher’s ability to create a learning atmosphere by “putting it on our level.” Students felt comfortable in class when they could
make mistakes and not feel like they were being punished afterwards. Participant number six stated “He (the teacher) was able to give me constructive criticism without me feeling criticized. I never felt like I was being put down.” Participants in the research agreed that the teachers of JCTC were able to give constructive criticism yet the students did not feel like they were being singled out or thought negatively of.

One particular question that was asked about teacher leadership was if the participants believed that the agriculture teachers of JCTC lead more through building relationships or by being role models/developmental leaders. The responses to that question were mixed. Many students found a variety not only between the teachers but also how teachers lead in different settings. A few participants mentioned that the teachers lead by being role models in the classroom and by building relationships in FFA. Participant number two stated that “you were like the coach. Always gave us pep talks to help raise moral and getting us to do more. Teacher one was like the momma bear. She was always the one that was nurturing. And teacher two was encouraging us to do more.” Participant number one stated that “Teacher one was super approachable and always there for you. Teacher two was a little more stern. His personality was more dominating. You were always full of energy and approachable. Always wanted us to do more.” These comments demonstrate how the participants were able to differentiate the leadership styles amongst the agriculture teachers.

Many participants thought the leadership styles of the agriculture teachers were different in different situations. Participant number six stated that “he had two totally different leadership styles in two different classes.” Through further questioning the participant was able to make reference to those experiences in those two classes. The participant spoke of how one class consisted of students that were fairly “rowdy” and the teacher lead by trying to build
relationships with the class. The same participant had the same teacher in a different agriculture class and the teacher had more of a role model style of leadership because the class was very interested in the subject being taught according to the participant. Participant number one stated that “it (leadership styles of teachers) was a diverse combination for all students.”

Also, participants pointed out the leadership style of the teachers had changed over the course of the four years spent with the teachers. Many participants stated that at first all teachers lead more by being role models/developmental, but as time progressed, the leadership style turned more towards being relationship building. When asked why they thought that was, students most often related the change in styles to their growing involvement in FFA. “Ya’ll felt more like my family,” participant number two stated. As follow up questions were asked to determine why there was a family feel the participant said the agriculture teachers felt like parents. “I spent more time with the advisors than my own parents, especially my senior year when I was in greenhouse. From January through May I was at JCTC all the time. I had parli practice, all the other FFA stuff and I stayed after school all the time helping in the greenhouse. I can remember being out in the greenhouse just talking about stuff that didn’t have anything to do with greenhouse.”

2. **Confidence in students and encouragement outside the realm of one’s comfort zone.**

Students gained trust and efficacy in their ability to perform in and out of the classroom from the instruction of their agriculture teacher. The encouragements lead to students elevating their leadership roles (primarily in FFA). The FFA chapter of Jessamine County is a student ran organization that depends on leadership from its students to be successful. Several participants noted they felt inadequate organizing, planning and implementing functions that may consist of participation from several members of their peers. Participant number seven stated that “I still
felt like a kid but you all always trusted us to do things and that gave us confidence to do it.”

Another participant said, “I thought it was so cool you all trusted us to do so much with banquet. I always thought that you all were so smart and I couldn’t believe that you all wanted us to plan and organize banquet especially when there was going to be so many people there. It really made me want to do good because I knew if you trusted us you were expecting it to be good.”

Participant number two said that “Teacher two is really good at encouraging you to do more. Certain things I automatically didn’t want to do like Ag. Issues but he was always so encouraging and I realized I was really good at it. He always thought I could do more than what I thought I could.” Participant number four said, “There’s no way that I would’ve gotten my auctioneer license or ever started singing if I hadn’t been pushed to do creed, talent contest at camp or get up in front of a group of people.” These are both examples of how the encouragement from the agriculture teachers was used to help students participate in various activities. When the questions were asked to the participants about leadership of the agriculture teachers, five of the eight participants mentioned some form of encouragement or being pushed to do more.

**Research Question 3:** Do JCTC agriculture teachers exhibit the four components of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration, to program completers?

The themes for this particular research question were divided into the four categories of transformational leadership as outlined in Chapter 2. Questions were asked about each component individually. All answers were then coded accordingly.

**Idealized Influence (II):** Making others feel good, making others proud, earning faith from the subordinate.
This first component of Transformational Leadership focuses on the admiration and respect that helps to make followers trust, respect and/or admire the leader. According to participants, all agriculture teachers at JCTC were able to model this leadership dynamic. Some of the reasons participants felt so were as follows: “Teachers were always helpful,” “I trusted your opinion on anything,” “respect you all as like I do my parents,” and “could call on you at any time.”

Further questioning was done to see why students were respecting of the agriculture teachers. One participant said, “I respected all of my agriculture teachers because I had a relationship and friendship with them. I respected them more than any other teacher I ever had.” Another participant stated, “I trusted you all because you were down to Earth. Even in class you weren’t reciting from a book. I liked the fact that you all tried to make class interesting and acted like real people. Everybody in class was treated fairly.” These examples exhibit the students did/does have respect for their agriculture teachers because of several reasons.

Also many participants pointed out the inclusiveness of the teachers in the agriculture department. Participant number four stated “teachers were able to make everyone in class feel comfortable.” Participants in the research told of how all students in the classroom felt equal. Many participants referenced that teachers did not play favorites to any one student or group of students. Participant eight even said ” the agriculture department as whole had a family feel to it.”

**Inspirational Motivation (IM): Leader communicates his/her goals, the manipulation of images, helping other find meaning in their work.**

The second component of Transformational Leadership focuses on the ability of leaders to inspire others to do more and to become leaders. Again, several similarities were found in the
participants answers relating to this component. When looking at the qualifications of successful transitions after graduation, one of the outcomes was pursuing post-secondary education. Of the eight participants interviewed, two are full time employees and the remaining six participants are currently enrolled in post-secondary institutions. Of those six students, four of those students are pursuing degrees in education and the other two of the six are pursuing degrees in agriculture.

When asked why those students are pursuing such degrees, several participants listed the influence of their agriculture teachers. Participant number eight stated “I wanted to go into education because of the experiences I had with the agriculture department. I saw how you all were as teachers and I wanted to be a teacher like that.” Another participant said, “I saw you all as role models and saw how you interacted with students. It made me want to be like you when I become a teacher.” One other participant said, “I don’t think I really have my set leadership style yet but I do use the leadership styles of you all to help me with developing mine.”

Participants that are not pursuing educational degrees are pursuing degrees in agriculture. One participant is pursuing a pre-veterinarian degree and the other is currently seeking a degree in Agriculture Biotechnology. When asked why they were pursuing those degrees both participants made reference to material they learned in agriculture class. One participant said, “I really didn’t have a clue what I wanted to do after high school but I loved all of my agriculture classes so I knew that it was going to be something in agriculture.”

Students either found an interest in agriculture that motivated them to seek further education in a particular aspect of agriculture while others listed the observation of the agriculture teachers teaching styles and how they would like to include those strategies in their own teaching styles one day.
Intellectual Stimulation (IS): Leader’s ability to make others think about new ways to perform work, new ways to look at work, ways to be creative in their own problem-solving methods.

The third component of Transformational Leadership focuses on the ability of leaders to stimulate others intellectually. Agriculture Education courses are elective classes in Jessamine County. Students are not required to take these classes to meet requirements for graduation. Unlike core classes, students are “electing” to be in these particular agriculture classes. The content matter of these classes consists of curriculum that is of interest to the students. Participant number four stated “agriculture classes didn’t feel like a required class.” A theme most often repeated was the student’s ability to present and communicate in front of a large group of people, collaborative work, creativity and problem solving. Participant number one said “you had freedom as a student to be creative. There was enough structure to still let students express their creativity.”

When asked to follow up on how students found it possible to learn these concepts, the most common response was the agriculture classes had real-world application. Participant number six stated “the ag. classes provided real life examples for problem solving.” The agriculture classes took material learned in core classes and applied those concepts in a way that brought clarity through a real life situation. One example that a participant provided included how mathematics in agriculture classes took procedures learned in algebra classes and gave them real life meaning. Participant eight spoke of how calculating seeding rates, fertilizer rates, area and fertilizer percentages made learning algebraic procedures easier than in algebra classes. Participant number four provided another example. This participant enjoyed how problem-solving techniques were taught in the Small Power and Equipment classes. He stated that no one
process was taught on how to solve problems and students were given the freedom to figure out problems on their own. Consequently, those also lead to creativity within problem-solving techniques according to participant four.

**Individual Consideration (IC): Individuals develop themselves, leader feedback to subordinates, time taken by the leader to bring workers into the team or group.**

The fourth concept to Transformation Leadership focuses on inclusion of the leader and how well he/she is able to make others feel a part of the group. Participant three said “the relationship the teacher had in the class felt equal.” This participant also went on to say that “no one (teacher) picked favorites. Everyone felt apart of class and looked up to each other in class. We had a relationship as a class and everyone wanted to do well.”

The dynamic of students in agriculture classes can be very diverse. As participant number one stated “the ag. program has diverse students but everyone seemed to always be involved.” Participant number two stated “I always felt included and free to talk about anything. There was equal attention given to everyone.”

When asked to provided examples on how the teachers were inclusive one participant said, “Anytime that we worked collaboratively in class, you always put us in groups. I always thought it was so we didn’t end up with our friends and talking the whole time but now that I’m taking some education classes in college, I realized that there was a good mixture of students in each group. It seems like students with IEP’s always had someone in their group that was able to help them out” Many participants pointed out that the agriculture teachers did a good job of giving equal attention to all students. A theme that was repeated was that despite the learning curve differences among the students, equality was shown to everyone.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Purpose of the Study/Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore the dynamic of the JCTC Agricultural Education department. More specifically, the techniques, skills and methods that prepare the program completers for successful transition after graduation. In order to obtain the purpose of the study, the following research questions were developed.

1. How do JCTC agricultural education teachers develop relationships with the program completers in a manner that supports a successful transition?
2. What teaching methods and leadership techniques do the teachers of JCTC Agricultural Education department exhibit that promote successful transition among program completers?
3. Do JCTC agriculture teachers exhibit the four components of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration, to program completers?

Research Design

This study was descriptive and qualitative by design. According to Jacob (1988) qualitative research is a generic term for investigative methodologies described as ethnographic, naturalistic, anthropological, field, or participant observer research (p 16). It emphasizes the importance of looking at variables in the natural setting in which they are found. Interaction between variables is important. Detailed data is gathered through open ended questions that provide direct quotations. The interviewer is an integral part of the investigation.
Successfully transitioned students, for the purpose of this study, were identified as those:

a) pursuing a post-secondary education; b) employed fulltime or as an entrepreneur in the workforce; and/or c) enlisted in a branch of the armed services, as defined by Kentucky Department of Education’s Career and Technical Education Department. Only these groups of students were concentrated on for this study. Students that fell into other categories were not considered successful for the purpose of this research. Furthermore, no other variables were taken into account; student gender, age, socioeconomic status, religion, family dynamic, and extracurricular activities were not considered pertinent in the overall design of the research conducted.

**Summary of Research Findings with Conclusions**

**Research Question 1: How do JCTC Agricultural Education teachers develop relationships with the program completers in a manner that supports a successful transition?**

**Summary** – Research question number one sought to find how the relationships were made with the teachers and students at JCTC and how that helped those students to transition successfully after graduation. The first process was to look at responses from participants that gave details as to how those relationships were formed. After following the steps outlined in chapter three for coding, both open and axial, three themes to this question arose: 1) teacher willingness to help in various magnitudes, 2) extended time beyond regular school day, and 3) connection to the teacher who introduced them to the program.

Theme number one listed several quotes from participants that gave details as to how agriculture teachers were available for their students. Many participants said the agriculture teachers were always available for assistance. Participants listed many examples of the various
ways that teachers were helpful to their students. Students said teachers were able to assist in ways such as assistance with school work and giving advice on personal matters.

Theme number two focused on relationships teachers were able to build by extending their time beyond the normal work schedule. Most frequently this extended time was spent with functions related to FFA. Participants named numerous experiences they had with their agriculture teachers during FFA activities. Students mentioned how those relationships were formed through FFA because teachers seemed more as a coach and motivator and not just a regular teacher. Many participants said as their FFA career developed and they became more involved in FFA, their relationship with their agriculture teachers became stronger. Students stated relationships between them and their teachers started off as being more of a role model / mentee relationship but as they progressed from a freshman to a senior, relationships grew deeper.

Theme number three to this research question made a connection between ability of teachers to build relationships with their students and the impact of the teacher who introduced them to the agriculture program. When participants were asked how they witnessed their agriculture teachers demonstrating leadership, participants most often referred back to his/her Principles of Agriculture class and those leadership styles of the teachers.

It was experiences in class that students reflected on as being motivating factors as to why they took more agriculture classes and became involved in FFA. Students said the Principles class was fun because the teacher made it fun. When asked why it was fun, participants said enthusiasm displayed by teachers helped make class entertaining and interesting. Participants believed teachers also demonstrated a strong passion for the class.
Conclusions - It was concluded that three discovered themes all assisted in helping teachers build relationships with their students. Relationships are built because teachers take the time to help students. When agriculture teachers take the time to help them out with whatever their struggles were, students noticed their teachers cared and a positive relationship resulted.

Whether it is with FFA or staying after school in the greenhouse, when teachers take the time to get to know their students they respond positively. Opportunities that program completers had to spend time with teachers outside of class were when relationships became stronger.

Additionally participants expressed when their teachers are enthusiastic and engaging in the classroom, they respond positively. Students appreciated when teachers taught with a passion and enthusiasm. When teachers were able to engage their students with this passion, students were more likely to become involved in class and in extracurricular activities the teacher pushed them to become involved in.

Research Question 2: What teaching methods and leadership techniques do the teachers of JCTC Agricultural Education department exhibit that promote successful transition among program completers?

Summary – Research question number two sought to find what leadership methods were used by agriculture teachers to encourage successful transition of students in their program. Various methods were discovered/apparent as to exactly how agriculture teachers were able to develop and encourage characteristics for successful transition among their students.

The first theme to this question was the teacher maintained a welcoming classroom environment. Participants gave multiple examples of how teaching methods and strategies of their agriculture teachers lead to a relationship with them. Participants said agriculture teachers were inclusive with their teaching strategies and everyone in class was treated equally. Sev
teaching methods and strategies of their agriculture teachers lead to a relationship with them eral participants mentioned teachers were able to “criticize” or grade students in class without feeling like they were being punished or looked down upon. Students felt like teachers were always encouraging them to try things outside of their comfort zone.

Within the classroom management styles and teaching techniques, students felt in many ways teachers were all unique. Not only were they unique from other teachers in the building but also unique from one another. Those differences were sometimes different from teacher to teacher and they were also different with the same teacher in various situations. The uniqueness of teaching styles was found to be refreshing to students. All participants made note that agriculture teachers did not teach from a book and they did not stand in front of class lecturing all day. Many students really enjoyed how hands on all of the classes were. Students listed the fact that they were able to do projects for test grades instead of taking a paper test as something different than most other teachers. To go along with those projects, students also really enjoyed freedom provided by agriculture teachers to allow them to be creative. Students had an opportunity to showcase their creativity and to think outside of the box in many projects.

Theme two to this research question was participants felt agriculture teachers were able to build relationships with their student because students felt as though teachers had confidence in them to do well. Students gained trust and efficacy in their ability to perform in and out of the classroom from the instruction of their agriculture teacher.

Students gave examples how their agriculture teachers put them in circumstances that had great responsibility and students were able to complete those tasks. Teachers had confidence in their students to perform and that confidence helped those students to be successful. Some students needed to be pushed to participate in various activities both in and out of the classroom.
Students were better able to complete those tasks when teachers encouraged them. Students had several recollections of not thinking they could perform a task or compete in a contest, but their agriculture teacher kept encouraging them and pushing them to try these new things and students were able to find success in those task and contests. Students suggested they would have never tried those things or even performed as well in those tasks had it not been for the encouragement of their agriculture teachers.

**Conclusions** – It was determined that a welcoming classroom environment of agriculture teachers lead to building relationships with students. There were several reasons students felt the environment of the classroom was welcoming. A leading response generated by students was teachers showed equality to everyone in the classroom. It appears teachers did not play favorites or try to belittle students in class. Although there were students in those agriculture classes that were very diverse, teachers were able to maintain inclusiveness within the class. Students respect the fact that teachers treated everyone equal. Respect was able to assist teachers in building relationships with students.

Teachers also demonstrated differences in leadership styles. Some teachers lead through positive reinforcement, others lead by pushing to do more. Differences among teachers and situations were still thought of positively among participants. Differentiation of leadership styles helped to establish a variety of teaching methods and classroom management strategies. Diversity of leadership styles amongst teachers and the use of various leadership styles in varying situations ultimately helped to create an inviting classroom experience. In some classes teachers may need to take different approaches to management of those classes. Just like students, no two classes are alike. What works for one Animal Science class may not work for next year’s Animal Science class. Teacher’s willingness to change up teaching methods and
styles helped to maintain a welcoming classroom environment and ultimately lead to building relationships with program completers.

Of the three agriculture instructors at JCTC, there was an overall common theme that two teachers lead more through relationships while the other lead more by being developmental. With encouragement of their teachers students were motivated to do well and felt accomplished when completing tasks.

**Research Question 3: Do JCTC agriculture teachers exhibit the four components of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration, to program completers?**

Responses for this particular research question were divided into four categories of transformational leadership as outlined in Chapter 2. Questions were asked about each component individually. All answers were then coded accordingly.

1) **Idealized Influence (II): Making others feel good, making others proud, earning faith from the subordinate.**

**Summary** - This first component of Transformational Leadership focuses on admiration and respect that helps to make followers trust, respect and/or admire the leader. Participants in this study listed many examples of why they respected their agriculture teachers. Some participants said they respected agriculture teachers because the teachers were helpful. Other participants said they respected agriculture teachers because they felt like they had a relationship and friendship with the teachers. Some participants also gave examples on how teaching styles of agriculture teachers lead to why they respected the teachers. Students appreciated agriculture teachers for not just teaching from a book and lecturing all day but rather tried to make class
interesting and acted like real people. Participants also said they respected agriculture teachers because of equality in the classroom. No students were treated unfairly and shown favoritism.

Conclusions - According to participants, all agriculture teachers at JCTC were able to model Idealized Influence. Participants listed many reasons why respect was felt for their agriculture teachers. Most examples provided included helpfulness, classroom management/instruction, equality and motivation.

   Students expressed they respected their agriculture teachers for many reasons. Although participants listed several different reasons why they respected their teachers, each and every participant was quick to say they most definitely did respect their agriculture teachers. It would appear students that are program completers in the agriculture department at JCTC do have respect for their agriculture teachers.

2) Inspirational Motivation (IM): Leader communicates his/her foals, the manipulation of images, helping other find meaning in their work.

Summary – The second component of Transformational Leadership focuses on the ability of leaders to inspire others to do more and to become leaders. When looking at qualifications of successful transitions after graduation, one outcome was pursuing post-secondary education. Of eight participants interviewed, two are full time employees and the remaining six participants are currently enrolled in post-secondary institutions. Of those six students, four are pursuing degrees in education and two are pursuing degrees in agriculture.

   Participants listed many reasons why they were pursuing such degrees. For participants majoring in education, all of them listed influence of agriculture teachers on them deciding to pursue education as a degree in college. Participants said they wanted to teach like their
agriculture teachers. Instruction and leadership from agriculture teachers at JCTC was influential in helping participants decide on a major in college.

Two participants pursuing agricultural degrees said curriculum learned from their agriculture teachers helped them to decide what they wanted to major in. Classes taught by agriculture teachers had an impact on selecting a major. Other participants also listed that while they may not have a lot of leadership roles in their lives just yet, they still hope to incorporate many leadership aspects of their agriculture teachers into developing their own leadership styles.

Conclusions – Again, participants provided several examples of how leadership of their agriculture teachers had an influence on their own leadership decisions and methods. Agriculture teachers assisted in selecting a major in college, which is one of the toughest decisions that many young adults make in their lives. Four of eight participants interviewed wanted to pursue a degree in education which could be a direct link to the Inspirational Motivation of their agriculture teachers. All four participants said teaching styles and leadership of their agriculture teachers is something they hope to emulate in their teaching styles. While only one of four future educators was pursuing an Agriculture Education degree, the fact they wanted to be teachers is still a very relevant example of how agriculture teachers were able to provide Inspirational Motivation.

Furthermore, two participants were also pursuing degrees in agriculture. As a teacher it is very rewarding to have students graduate and go on to college. It is far more rewarding when those students are pursuing degrees in the subject matter you taught them. Both of these students said they found a passion in agriculture because of taking agriculture classes in high school. Inspirational Motivation of their agriculture teachers helped in making decisions to pursuing agriculture as a college major.
3) **Intellectual Stimulation (IS):** Leader’s ability to make others think about new ways to perform work, new ways to look at work, ways to be creative in their own problem-solving methods.

**Summary** – The third component of Transformational Leadership focuses on the ability of leaders to stimulate others intellectually. Agriculture classes are elective classes. It is not a requirement for a student to take them. Therefore students choose to take these classes because they have some type of interest in those classes.

Participants gave several examples of how agriculture classes were stimulating. A common reference was agriculture classes provided real world application. One student talked about learning algebra in a horticulture class by calculating seeding rates, fertilizer rates and fertilizer percentages. Another student spoke of being able to take what he learned in his Small Power class and actually being able to utilize the information learned in class.

Several other participants also listed agriculture classes provided them an opportunity to be creative and work with others. Participants said collaborative work in the classroom was frequently found in agriculture classes at JCTC. Students were able to learn how to work together for a common task.

**Conclusions** - According to eight participants of this study, it would appear agriculture teachers are able to provide Intellectual Stimulation. Students kept referring to agriculture classes providing real world application. Algebra being incorporated into an agriculture curriculum is an excellent example of how teachers were stimulating their students intellectually. All eight participants said agriculture classes were intellectually stimulating.

Students were able to recall how information learned in class was easily applied in a real world situation. Some students even mentioned they were able to learn some concepts taught in
core classes better in agriculture classes. It could be students are more interested in agriculture classes and that is why it is easier to learn, or it could be teaching styles of teachers are different and students found it easier to learn better from another teacher. Either way, students listed agriculture classes provided real world situations as to why they were able to master material being taught.

4) Individual Consideration (IC): Individuals develop themselves, leader feedback to subordinates, time taken by the leader to bring workers into the team or group.

Summary – This fourth concept to Transformation Leadership focuses on inclusion of the leader and how well he/she is able to make others feel a part of the group. This fourth component of transformation leadership was witnessed by participants of this study. Participants provided numerous examples of how they felt included and a part of the class/group.

One participant noted how diverse the students were in agriculture classes. The participant also noted how everyone was always involved. Participants said teachers were able to give equal attention to everyone in class even with a diverse dynamic. Students also related the inclusiveness of teachers to the atmosphere of the class. Everyone felt equal and there did not seem to be anyone left out.

Conclusions – Based from examples provided by participants, it would seem Individual Consideration was demonstrated by agriculture teachers. Students gave great examples of how they felt included in their agriculture classes. Participants also said they were able to witness how agriculture teachers were able to make others feel a part of class. Even though these participants are program completers in the agriculture pathway, they noted how agriculture teachers did not have favorites and tried to incorporate everyone in class.
Agriculture teachers did pay attention to the needs of all students. From interviews provided, students listed how teachers were able to include advanced learners, to students with severe IEP’S and the sometimes forgotten “middle of the road” students. Participants stated that cooperative learning was a success in class because teachers always made sure everyone had input in groups.

**Overall Conclusions** – Agriculture teachers at JCTC were able to demonstrate all four components of transformational leadership. Students provided evidence to demonstrate exactly how teachers used these four components in various manners. Teachers provided Idealized Influence by being helpful; Teachers provided Inspirational Motivation by assisting students with college majors and influencing students to become leaders; Teachers provided Intellectual Stimulation by providing curriculum with real world application; Teachers provided Individual Consideration by showing equality and inclusiveness.

**Implications / Recommendations**

From these conclusions, recommendations can be made for the agriculture department at JCTC. First of all, the agriculture department at JCTC is recommended to use the findings from this study to help more program completers. As evident from findings of this study, JCTC agriculture teachers exhibit qualities of transformational leadership that do assist students in successful transitions after high school. While there were many other factors to help those students with successful transition, it was apparent transformational leadership of the agriculture teachers provided an avenue for teachers to build relationships with students and those relationships helped to build respect and ultimately helped those students to have successful transitions.
Transformational leadership is a leadership style that supports success among its “followers”. If transformational leadership can assist high school students to successfully transition after graduation, then perhaps it could also assist businesses to operate better, government officials to lead more diligently and military personnel to motivate more affectively. The premise of transformational leadership is for leaders to develop a relationship with their factions to achieve a common goal. When a relationship is formed between leader and follower, success is found.

It would be recommended that all teachers at JCTC utilize transformational leadership in their classes to help students with transitions after high school. There are many program completers at JCTC that are not in the agriculture pathway. As this study mentioned before, there are various other pathways at JCTC that are offered. Being that JCTC offers more elective credits than either of the high schools in Jessamine County, all teachers in the building should practice transformational leadership to assist with program completers. The evidence provided from this research suggests that transformational leadership assists in successful transition so essentially all teachers at JCTC should practice those qualities of transformational leadership.

From findings of this study the researcher would also make recommendations on how to improve this study if duplicated in the future. The researcher realizes it is an exploratory research and not all bias can be ruled out. However, there is one change that would be made to further assist in ruling out bias. All participants in this study were completers in the agriculture pathway; those participants had taken at least four agriculture classes during their four years in high school. While taking classes, many participants also became involved in after school activities related to class or became actively involved in FFA. Due to active involvement by participants, the researcher had already formed a relationship with participants therefore
participants in the study may have provided answers to the researcher that were skewed somewhat from their actual beliefs. Although the researcher took precautions to insure participants did not feel pressured to answer untruthfully, existing relationships between the researcher and the participants may have assisted participants to give answers that the researcher wanted to hear. Therefore, if this study was duplicated, the researcher would recommend an interviewer for the study to be a person that has no relationship with participants. This would help to rule out bias even more in the study and perhaps provide more sound evidence for the study.

A recommendation to further this study would be to compare the results of this study to the successful FFA programs in Kentucky. At the end of the year, FFA chapters around the state are given a rating. The top chapters earn a gold rating which is the highest you can earn. However, fifteen gold award chapters are chosen to compete at the national level (through an application process) for national recognition. This study could be duplicated on students from those chapters that earn a gold rating and could also be done to chapters that did not earn a gold rating. Results compounded to see if transformational leadership from agriculture teachers played a role in the success of the FFA chapter.

I would also recommend that results from this study be used to see if students that did not complete a career major ever witnessed transformational leadership from the teacher. One theme found in the research was students were “hooked” by the Principles of Agriculture class; more importantly, teaching styles of teachers in those classes. Still not all students in those classes graduated as a program completer in that area. The researcher recommends that a future study be done on those non program completes to see why they did not complete the career major in that area. The frame for this study only used program completers from one area, agriculture.
However many students may graduate with one career major but may have had classes in other areas as well. Did the transformational leadership of the instructor help or hinder those students to go into other pathways?

Student success has always been the goal of most teachers across the U.S. In Kentucky, students that are successful after graduation are those students that are seeking post-secondary education, employed full time or enlisted in a branch of the military. As evident from this study, the JCTC agriculture teachers are demonstrating transformational leadership that assist with students to successfully transition after high school. Teachers at JCTC are building relationships with their students. Teachers at JCTC are using teaching methods and classroom management strategies that encourage students to do well in class and try new things. Teachers at JCTC are utilizing the four components of transformation leadership that helps to build those relationships with students and gain respect from those students. All of these are helping students to successfully transition after high school.
APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

1. What is leadership?

2. a. What is the most important attribute of a leader?
   b. Do you believe your agriculture teachers showcased what you considered to be the most important attribute of a leader?

3. Did your agriculture teachers at JCTC exhibit leadership?

4. How did your agriculture teachers at JCTC exhibit leadership? If different, explain the differences.

5. Do you respond more to leaders that are relationship building or role modeling/developmental? Why?

6. Did your agriculture teachers lead more through relationship building, role modeling/developmental, or both? (Transactive v/s Transformational) If each were different, explain.

7. Do you respond better through positive reinforcement or focused goal achievement/ constantly being pushed to do more without reinforcement? Why?

8. a. Did you admire, respect and/or trust the agriculture teachers at JCTC (II)
   b. If YES, what was it about their leadership that made you feel that way? Or just say EXPLAIN

9. a. Did the agriculture teachers at JCTC inspire you to be a leader? (IM)
   b. If YES, what was it about their leadership that inspired you to be a leader? Or just say EXPLAIN

10. a. Did the agriculture teachers at JCTC stimulate you intellectually (make you think about new ways to perform work, be creative in problem solving etc.)? (IS)
    b. If YES, what was it about their leadership that stimulated you intellectually? Or just say EXPLAIN

11. a. Did the agriculture teachers at JCTC pay attention to your individual needs and make you feel a part of the group? (IC)
    b. If YES, how was it that they did so? Or just say EXPLAIN.

12. Do you attribute any of your successes to the leadership of your agriculture teachers?

13. Do you believe your leadership represents that of your agriculture teachers?
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