

UNDERSTANDING HOW TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERS INSPIRE EMPLOYEE
ENGAGEMENT IN RAPIDLY CHANGING ENVIRONMENTS

by

Michael Wayne Coleman

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Business Administration

Liberty University

December 2017

Abstract

Over the past five years, North Carolina community colleges have experienced a plethora of rapid changes, which can have a negative impact on employee engagement. Individuals who possess a transformational style of leadership typically inspire employees to engage in their work despite a rapidly changing environment. The specific business problem in this research study was a lack of understanding of how transformational leaders in North Carolina community colleges were inspiring employees to engage in their jobs during a rapidly changing environment. To address this significant issue, the researcher interviewed a group of senior transformational leaders from various community colleges within the system, to learn specific narrative accounts of how inspiration was occurring. The findings of this study contained six themes, which provided a selection of best practices that future leaders could follow. The best practices included activities, processes, ideas, and events that the transformational leaders were using to address employee engagement issues. The overarching theme discovered in this study was that there are no perfect examples of how inspiration should take place. The best way a leader could attempt to inspire employee engagement was to embody the character traits associated with the transformational leadership style by building relationships, providing them with resources, or investing in their future. From a biblical application standpoint, the findings of this study should challenge Christian business leaders to utilize a transformational leadership style to develop employees to use their God-given talents and abilities for his glory.

Key words: transformational leadership, employee engagement, inspirational motivation, rapidly changing environment, North Carolina community colleges

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the love of my life, my wonderful wife Kathleen, who stood by my side with encouragement, patience, and prayers as I pursued this dream. This endeavor would simply not have been possible without her continual support of my goals, even in the midst of the trying times when this educational journey stood between me and my family. I further dedicate this work to my children, Zachary and Ella, for waiting patiently as daddy needed just a few more minutes to finish his work, while they anxiously waited for the play time they so lovingly deserved. You could not understand it at the time, but this was all for you.

Acknowledgments

This educational journey warrants more acknowledgments than I have space to write. First and foremost, I would like to thank my wife and children for their support in standing by me as I pursued this dream. Your willingness to be there for me throughout the process will never be forgotten. I would also like to acknowledge my amazing mom and dad. Life was sometimes hard growing up, and I personally never thought I would one day be in a position to be called “doctor” anything. However, you had a vision for my life that was instilled in me at a young age, and despite my insecurities, you never let it go. Without your belief in my abilities, and your continuous support, I would have given up long ago. A special thank you to my committee chair, Dr. Jean Gordon, for helping me formulate all my random thoughts and ideas into what has become the driving force behind my passion for leadership development. To the deans, instructors, and support staff at Liberty University, who gave me the tools and prayer I needed to be successful, I thank you. Additionally, I would like to thank Dr. Bill Carver, president of Nash Community College. You were the person who first encouraged me to pursue this doctorate degree, while also giving me the opportunities in my career to become the leader I am today. For that I will be forever grateful. Dr. Daniel Wilson, your guidance in helping me navigate the dissertation process, while being a sounding board for my ideas was crucial towards my success. To the many other family members, friends, mentors, pastors, and supporters; I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Finally, but most importantly, I would like to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Without your love, guidance, and sacrifice I would be nothing. You taught me patience, when I had none. You gave me hope, when I felt hopeless. When I was tired and weary, you were my sustaining strength. And for that, I thank you Lord.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Managing employee engagement through a rapidly changing environment is a complex issue found within many of the 58 community colleges in North Carolina today (Brown & Spies, 2015). This issue exists due to the increasing leadership challenges that constitute organizational change as institutions attempt to remain relevant in a fluid business environment (Waldman, 2010). How leaders approach keeping their employees continually engaged to ensure success is of great significance. This research describes how transformational leaders inspire employee engagement through rapidly changing environments to achieve organizational goals.

Background of the Problem

Effectively managing employee engagement in community colleges today is a critical issue that leaders must understand to achieve both institutional and state-wide goals (Travisano, 2016). While employee engagement is important in any business, it has become increasingly difficult to manage in the community college setting due to many rapidly changing conditions that can have a negative impact on staff (Hicks, West, Amos, & Maheshwari, 2014). Enrollment variation, decreased state funding, reduced resources, complex work environments, and local policies that do not align with other colleges, are some of the conditions that have a direct impact on the working environment in community colleges (Travisano, 2016).

The North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) is comprised of 58 community colleges, which are spread throughout the state. The mission of the system is “to open the door to high-quality, accessible educational opportunities that minimize barriers to post-secondary education, maximize student success, develop a global, multicultural and competent workforce, and improve the lives and well-being of N.C. citizens” (“Get the facts,” 2014, p. 1). Each individual institution has the autonomy to create and manage policies and procedures

through a local board of trustees and a president who adhere to an administrative code that is maintained and governed by the State Board of Community Colleges (Harbour, 2002). Since its inception, the NCCCS has grown tremendously in the number of students it serves throughout the state (Parker, 2010). An increased customer base has brought new challenges to community colleges through the need for organizational restructuring, additional staffing, and updated facilities (Tschechtelin, 2011). While student enrollment has historically been a driving force for change in community colleges, recent initiatives have placed a high emphasis on achieving student success (2011). Such initiatives can be taxing on college employees as they seek ways to implement the changes effectively, with little additional resources, and a greater demand for results (Brimhall, 2014). In order to manage the changes while achieving institutional goals, community college leaders should seek to inspire their staff to remain engaged in their roles through the use of a transformational leadership style (Taylor-Sawyer, 2004).

While the existing literature measures the impact of transformational leadership on employee engagement through statistical data, there is a gap that seeks to understand how transformational leaders inspire employee engagement through rapid change. More specifically, research is needed to reflect how engagement is inspired during the many rapid changes employees are required to implement in North Carolina community colleges. Such rapid changes include policies, procedures, and initiatives created to remain compliant with new state and federal laws, organizational restructuring due to leadership changes, and reductions in state and local funding. This research is significant as the knowledge gained can be used to better inform future community college presidents and senior administrators on how to improve engagement through rapid change with a transformational leadership style.

Problem Statement

High employee engagement is critical to achieving improved organizational outcomes, especially during an environment of rapid change (Leeds & Nierle, 2014). Transformational leaders exhibit behaviors that seek to motivate or inspire employees within an organization to engage in their roles in a way that produces high quality results (Bottomley, Burgess, & Fox III, 2014). Hays (2012) claims that leaders face many challenges in their attempt to inspire employees, including understanding what methods to use in practicing their efforts. In the world of education, high employee engagement has been linked to both high worker performance and high student performance, in addition to greater office morale (Freeborough, 2012). Mangum (2013) notes that rapid change in the community college setting can greatly impact the ability of transformational leaders to obtain organizational goals, further complicating their effort to understand how to appropriately inspire employees. Coons (2012) asserts that community college leaders must determine how best to inspire employees to engage in their work in order to achieve greater production and efficiencies during an environment of rapid change. The specific business leadership problem addressed in this study was a lack of understanding of how transformational leaders in North Carolina community colleges were inspiring employees to engage in their jobs during a rapidly changing environment.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this narrative qualitative study was to gain an understanding of how transformational leaders within the NCCCS inspire employees to engage in their jobs while experiencing rapid changes. Employee engagement is defined as the physical, cognitive, and emotional involvement individuals have in performing assigned roles (Kahn & Heaphy, 2013). A transformational leader is a person who can motivate and inspire others to reach new heights,

while developing deep admiration, loyalty, and respect from followers (Yukl, 2010). For the purpose of this study, transformational leaders were identified as community college presidents, chief academic officers, or senior student development officers, who possess a transformational leadership style. The behaviors of transformational leaders have been positively tied to employee engagement through various means such as the creation of a favorable work environment (Li, 2016); however, there is little research reflecting how leaders inspire engagement during rapid change. A rapidly changing environment is one that gets increasingly complex due to numerous challenges that are placed upon an organization within a short amount of time (Kushell, 2013). In this study, the rapidly changing environment of the NCCCS is one that has become overly complex within the past five years due to the numerous challenges being presented at the same time. Such challenges include: multiple initiatives to implement in response to new federal and state legislation; lack of funding for appropriate staff; inadequate resources for training and professional development; and deteriorating work environments. The transformational leaders who were interviewed offered guidance that will assist new presidents, chief academic officers, and senior student development officers, who are faced with facilitating employee engagement while experiencing rapid changes.

Nature of the Study

Qualitative research methods are perfect for studies that seek to understand the experiences, perceptions, or views of a targeted population (Stake, 2010). Like quantitative research, qualitative studies can address the causation of events or issues through both observation and interpretation (Black, 1994). Unlike quantitative research, qualitative studies focus on understanding, rather than measuring. Alternatively, quantitative research methods are best used when an investigator identifies a research problem and needs to explain why something

occurs (Creswell, 2012). Creswell (2012) claims that a quantitative approach should be used when a research problem needs to be explained, and a qualitative approach should be used for problems that need to be explored. More specifically, quantitative approaches focus on comparing two or more variables through analysis to determine how they relate to one another (Barnham, 2015).

A qualitative method was selected for this study because the researcher sought to understand how transformational leaders were inspiring employees to engage while undergoing rapid change. Due to a gap in the literature, such a study was not readily available. More specifically, there is a void in literature that provides details of how transformational leaders engage employees despite an environment of rapid change. The use of qualitative research methodologies helps gain an understanding of the perspectives of certain groups of people, which can be valuable towards understanding if change is needed (Knudsen et al., 2012). Qualitative studies that involve interviews with individuals, such as transformational leaders or their employees, can assist researchers in gaining important information that cannot be easily interpreted by quantitative data (Black, 1994). A quantitative method would have assisted the researcher if the goal had been to measure any correlation between levels of inspiration and employee engagement, or the impact rapid change has on employee engagement. However, existing research and literature has already been conducted to measure such correlations with positive results (Li, 2016). Other quantitative studies have measured the characteristics of transformational leaders (Mangum, 2013), and their behaviors (Bottomley, Burgess, & Fox III, 2014), rendering the need for further quantitative research in that area inappropriate. A mixed method was not appropriate for this study due to its required time frame, and the existing quantitative literature already conducted.

The researcher used a narrative design for this qualitative study because the focal point was to understand what lived stories or experiences transformational leaders in the NCCCS had when they inspired their employees to engage. Creswell (2013) claims a narrative study is conducted when a researcher collects stories and experiences from a target audience through personal interviews for the purpose of conducting a thematic analysis. In this particular case, the researcher conducted interviews with community college presidents, chief academic officers, and senior student development officers who displayed a transformational leadership style. Their responses to the interview questions were then analyzed to create themes, which were used to tell the story of how employee engagement was achieved for future leaders to use as a guide.

Phenomenological research is similar to narrative research in several ways (Creswell, 2012). For example, both study the lived experiences of a target audience and develop themes from the data collected. However, the major difference is how and why the themes are created. In phenomenological studies, the focus is on describing and understanding what phenomenon is taking place, and how it impacts the lived experiences of a person (Creswell, 2013). Connelly (2010) notes the key to a phenomenological study is discovering the lived experiences of individuals who have participated in a phenomenon, such as overcoming a sudden disability or ailment. While the process of interviewing participants and creating themes is very similar to the narrative research design chosen for this study, the researcher decided not to use a phenomenological method because of the absence of a phenomenon that would cause employees to engage or disengage in their work.

A grounded theory form of research is conducted in order to discover a theory or unified theoretical explanation that describes a process (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). The goal of grounded theory is to setup a framework, or set of boundaries, that supports a series of processes that will

occur over time based on the data collected (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Throughout the process of gathering data, a researcher may interview participants several times in order to fill in gaps until the theory is fully developed (Creswell, 2013). This form of methodology was not chosen in this instance because the goal was not to develop one overarching theory on how engagement occurs. Instead, the researcher sought to develop themes of lived examples that would give future leaders several ways to approach engaging their employees instead of just one theoretical approach.

Ethnography is a methodology that involves studying and observing an entire cultural or social group in order to understand behaviors, patterns, customs, or ways of life from their perspective (Ross, Rogers, & Duff, 2016). In many instances, the researcher will be immersed into the lives and culture of the group being studied for a better understanding. Ethnography research is conducted when the goal is to understand a large, sometimes complex, issue such as rules for behavior (Creswell, 2012). This type of methodology was not chosen because its outcomes do not fit the intended purpose of the researcher conducting this study. While the transformational leaders being studied are a part of a culture-sharing group in the NC Community College System, their behaviors and relationships are not the topic of conversation.

A case study design is conducted within a bounded context over a specific time period (Yin, 2009). Case studies focus on an actual case that is currently happening in real-time and seeks to present an in-depth understanding through multiple data collecting approaches such as: observations, interviews, reports, or documents (Creswell, 2013). They can be very simplistic (Stake, 2010), or complex (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Often, case studies span over a longer time frame so that the researcher can gain as much information as possible before presenting the results. A case study methodology was not chosen by the researcher because

understanding the process of inspiration and employee engagement is not a specific case, and does not occur over a set time span.

Research Questions

This narrative qualitative study explores how transformational leaders in North Carolina community colleges inspire employee engagement in the midst of a rapidly changing environment. The central research questions are:

1. How do leaders within the NCCCS inspire employee engagement in a rapidly changing environment?

Additional research questions addressed in this study are:

2. What rapid changes in the NCCCS are causing employees to potentially disengage?
3. What experiences do transformational leaders have in motivating employees to overcome challenges in order to engage in their work?
4. What methods do transformational leaders use to develop employees into future leaders?
5. How do transformational leaders know they have inspired employees to engage?

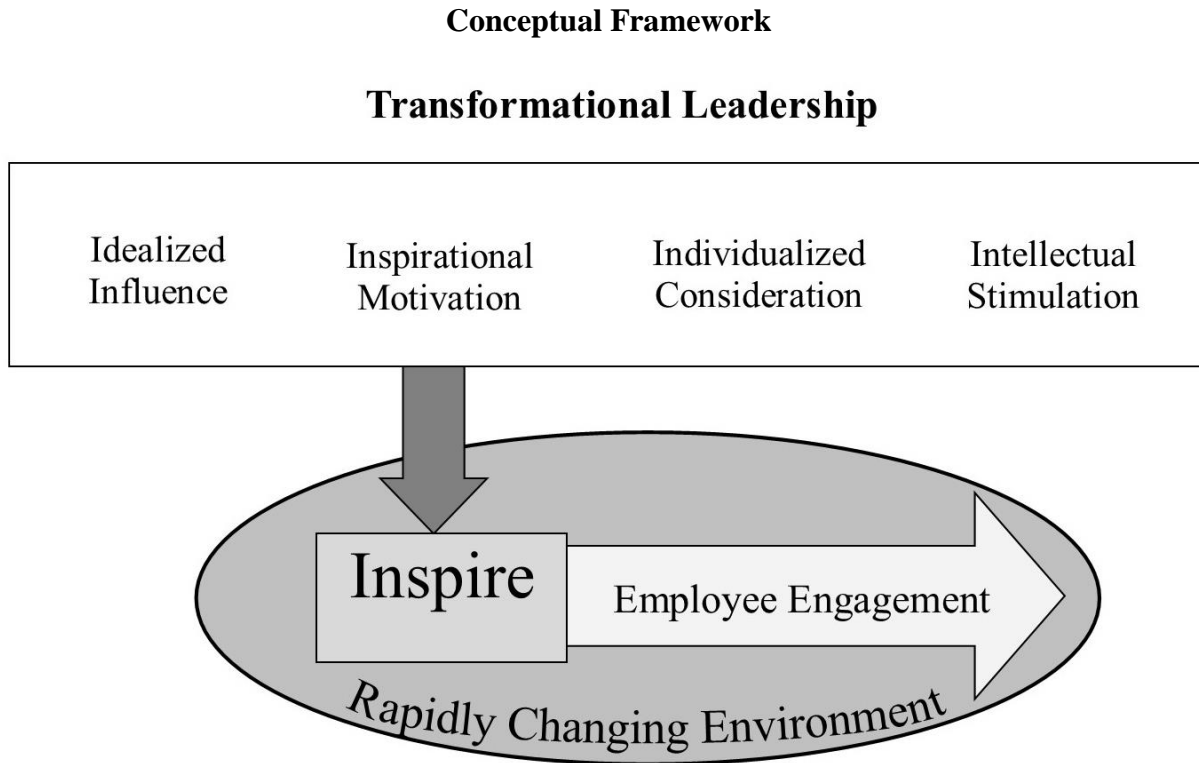


Figure 1. Visual of conceptual framework

A conceptual framework in qualitative studies is used to weave the project together by uniting concepts or components from the available literature to tie back to the study (Creswell, 2013). In this study, the researcher used a conceptual framework, which included four components: transformational leadership, inspirational motivation, employee engagement, and rapidly changing environments. The main focus was on the transformational leadership style, which Bass (1999) claims is the most effective style towards inspiring followers to engage in their work, thereby becoming more effective and productive employees. Inspirational motivation is one of the four dimensions within transformational leadership, which places great emphasis on leaders inspiring their followers to perform or engage at a higher level (Bass, 1997). The next two components are directly related in this study, as the researcher attempted to

understand how transformational leaders go about inspiring employees to engage in their duties while going through a rapidly changing environment.

The diagram of the conceptual framework (Figure 1) visually depicts this relationship and the process by which transformational leaders inspire employee engagement through a rapidly changing environment. Each component of the conceptual framework was individually explored in the review of professional and academic literature, and then tied together through further research. As the main concept of this conceptual framework, transformational leadership includes four unique dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation (Bass, 1997). In this study, the researcher focused on inspirational motivation, which involves effective communication to increase follower engagement in the middle of a rapidly changing environment (Bass, Avolio, & Atwater, 1996). While it is widely accepted that transformational leaders inspire followers through a process of inspirational motivation, it is not clearly understood how the leaders go about doing it to increase engagement through rapid changes, particularly within the NCCCS. By understanding how to inspire employee engagement during rapid change, current and future leaders will be better equipped to address engagement issues within their organization.

Transformational Leadership Theory and Inspirational Motivation

Bass (1990) claims transformational leadership is one of many leadership styles found in modern academic writing. Rowold (2014) notes that the theory of transformational leadership has evolved since its first mention in the mid-1980s, and is now more researched than any other style. The keyword for the leadership theory is inspire, which describes role of leaders in motivating followers with a positive, value-based vision of the future (2014). When the theory was originally developed, Bass (1985) proposed four dimensions of transformational leadership,

which is based on the relationship between the leader and followers. As already mentioned, the four dimensions (also called the four I's) were: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. This particular study is grounded on the inspirational motivation dimensions of transformational leadership. Inspirational motivation focuses on the process of inspiring employees as human capital, thereby setting expectations for their work at a much higher level (Ghasabeh, Reaiche, & Soosay, 2015). The concepts of transformational leadership, and its inspirational motivation dimension, relate to this study because research has shown that employee engagement is positively impacted by leaders who inspire them (Albrecht, 2010). The use of transformational leadership is now understood to be a catalyst for employee engagement within the workplace, with organizational commitment, trust, and goal obtainment being some of its best attributes among employees (2010). Reid-Bunch (2006) asserts that approximately 86% of all community college presidents practice the transformational leadership style. Therefore, it was believed that the transformational leadership lens would best inform the expectations of this research, by providing a valid theory of related concepts with which to guide the study.

Employee Engagement and Rapidly Changing Environments

The final two components of the conceptual framework are employee engagement and rapidly changing environments. The goal for researching these concepts in this study was to determine how employees are engaged in their daily jobs while working through a rapidly changing environment. Hays (2012) claims that motivating employees to engage in work is a fundamental task every leader should thoroughly understand for an organization to perform at the highest level. While the benefits of a highly engaged workforce are numerous, there are several obstacles or conditions where engagement is stifled or even discouraged. One such

obstacle to employee engagement is the presence of rapid changes within an organization, or a rapidly changing organizational environment (Harrill, Lawton, & Fabianke, 2015). Because rapidly changing environments typically create numerous opportunities for employee disengagement from organizational staff, understanding how leaders inspire those employees to engage is of particular interest. For this study, the researcher has narrowed the focus to community colleges within the NCCCS. Rapid changes to the community college environment within the past five years include: budget cuts from both state and county funds, too many initiatives to address success goals, and the increasing time and resources required to accomplish goals that are not aligned with institutional strategy (2015). Overall, this conceptual framework laid the groundwork for a thorough study, which recommends best practices from community college presidents, chief academic officers, and senior student development officers on how to inspire employee engagement in spite of the rapid changes taking place.

Definition of Terms

Chief Academic Officer: The chief academic officer (CAO) of a community college may vary from institution to institution. However, the role usually reports directly to the president, and is the administrative head of all academic programs, including all instructional employees, faculty, and staff (Anderson, Murray, & Olivarez, 2002). At many institutions, the CAO is second in command to the president, and has direct influence over inspiring employee engagement in instructional employees.

Employee Engagement: Employee engagement is best defined as the physical, cognitive, and emotional involvement individuals have in performing their assigned roles (Kahn & Heaphy, 2013). It includes the desire of an employee to invest in the workplace for the purpose of making a positive impact in the business environment (Leeds & Nierle, 2014). In this study,

employee engagement among community college faculty and staff specifically focused physical, cognitive, and emotional drive to stay motivated or invest in ones work when several challenges were disrupting the normal working environment, causing an increased work load, or making job duties more complex. Employee engagement can play a crucial role in the management and organizational effectiveness of an institution (Jha & Kumar, 2016).

Inspirational Motivation: Inspirational motivation (IM) is one of the four components, or four I's, of transformational leadership (Bass, 1997). Of the four components, inspirational motivation occurs when leaders inspire by providing their followers with meaning and challenge them by utilizing simple language, symbols, and images (1997). The leader also increases the enthusiasm and optimism of followers by frequently communicating and instilling confidence (Bass, Avolio, & Atwater, 1996). Zafft (2013) notes that inspirational motivation occurs in community colleges when a transformational leader seeks to inspire followers to be committed to a shared vision.

President: In the community college setting, the president is the chief executive officer (CEO). The president acts in the main leadership role of an institution, reporting to a board of trustees (McNair, 2015). One of the many characteristics of a president is the ability to inspire employees to fulfill the college's mission (Mangum, 2013). A community college president often plays a lead role in the organizational direction and can either help or hurt the workplace environment with decisions and actions.

Rapidly Changing Environment: For the purpose of this study, a rapidly changing environment is one that gets increasingly complex due to numerous challenges that are placed upon an organization within a time span of five years (Kushell, 2013). Challenges that create a rapidly changing environment will include: a poor economy (Thomas, 2013), too many unclear

or conflicting initiatives (Gaan & Bhoon, 2012), complex organizational changes (Trzaska, 2014), legislative mandates (Thomas, 2013), and decreased funding and resources (Tschechtelin, 2011). Rapid change has been proven to cause employee disengagement, which if not properly addressed can lead to issues with productivity and workplace morale (Hassett & Strain, 2016).

Senior Student Development Officer: The senior student development officer (SSDO), also known as the chief student affairs officer, is the administrative head of the student affairs division of a community college (Tull, 2014). The SSDO is typically a member of the president's cabinet, and directly manages all functions and employees inside what is considered the student development office, which includes: Enrollment/admissions, registrars, financial aid staff, counselors, student activities, and other student related employees. While colleges and institutions vary in their approach, many individuals with this position also supervise other branches of non-academic staff positions including college libraries, information technology, and work study programs. Because of their position, SSDO leaders are typically on the front lines of rapid organizational changes that can impact employee engagement (Coons, 2012).

Transformational Leader: For the purpose of this study, a transformational leader will be any president, chief academic officer, or senior student development officer within the NCCCS mentioned. Such leaders will exhibit the characteristics and traits of a transformational leader as identified by the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) survey. Bass (1985) notes that a transformational leader is one who motivates others to do more than they were originally expected to do by raising the level of consciousness about important values, and inspiring them to go beyond personal self-interests. The MLQ 5X survey is the primary tool used to determine an individual's leadership style based on personal characteristics or traits that align with transformational leadership (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999). While MLQ 5X identifies other styles

of leadership, the transformational style is the primary focus of this study, and therefore will be the only one defined.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

The researcher assumed that a majority of community college leaders had a transformational leadership style in the NCCCS. This assumption proved to be accurate when over three-quarters of the leaders surveyed possessed transformational leadership traits. The researcher had no difficulty interviewing two presidents, two chief academic officers, and two senior student development officers from community colleges in North Carolina. While evidence in other community college systems pointed to the likelihood that most leaders would embody a transformational style, it was not observed to be the case in North Carolina before this research was conducted. If the researcher had discovered that a majority of leaders were not considered transformational, it would have lessened the number of candidates available from which data could be collected.

The researcher also assumed that many leaders would need to inspire followers to engage through a rapidly changing environment. While challenges that create a rapidly changing environment within the community college system were already known, there was previously little data to support issues with employee engagement beyond the researcher's personal experiences. Based on the rapid changes personally observed, the assumption was made that employee disengagement must be occurring. After conducting the research and interviewing NCCCS leaders, that assumption was confirmed. The leaders gave personal examples of rapid changes happening in the colleges, and the negative impact on engagement that resulted.

While existing research had proven that transformational leaders inspire followers, it was an assumption to believe such actions improve employee engagement in the NCCCS. There was previously no research directly discussing transformational leadership in NC community colleges as it relates to employee engagement. Once the researcher had interviewed the participants, it was discovered that their inspirational efforts did increase employee engagement in the NCCCS. The increases in engagement did not appear to be a byproduct of other leadership activities, or unrelated factors. Instead, it was a response to the inspirational efforts of the transformational leaders as assumed. This finding was significant towards addressing how engagement was taking place despite the environment of rapid change.

Limitations

This research does contain a few limitations. For example, the researcher placed trust in the participants to answer the survey items correctly. If the participants rushed through the survey without answering honestly, it could have skewed the results and potentially mislabeled them as transformational. If the participants were mislabeled, then an argument could be made that the research was not truly based on the transformational leadership style. However, the responses that emerged from the selected interview participants all appeared to contain information that was transformational in nature. Therefore, the researcher believes this potential limitation to be unlikely.

Another limitation was the number of leaders from the NCCCS that actually participated in the survey. Of the 153 senior leaders in the NCCCS, 17 individuals in each position (or one-third of the total population) were randomly selected to participate in the qualifying survey. However, only 11 individuals responded to the request to participate and took the survey. Of the 11 participants, nine were found to have a transformational leadership style. At least two

individuals from each position were represented in the nine, which enabled the researcher to further interview two presidents, CAOs, and SSDOs as planned. While the research goal was achieved, the limited number of participants to choose from may not accurately represent the total population in the NCCCS. It is important to point out that the individuals who were interviewed all answered the research questions posed, and represented both large and small institutions from around the NCCCS. Also worth noting is the nature of a narrative design, which limits the number of qualitative stories collected. This means only six leaders would have been chosen for interviews regardless of the number of qualifying survey participants.

Delimitations

Several delimitations were included in the research study. First, only senior administrators within the NCCCS were selected, which includes presidents, chief academic officers, and senior student development officers. This decision was based on their direct ability to impact employee engagement within the colleges. Second, only leaders who were identified as transformational were interviewed because transformational leadership is the conceptual framework of this study. Within transformational leadership, one of the main functions of a transformational leader is inspirational motivation. Interviews were conducted on a select few senior administrators from the 58 community colleges in the System.

Significance of the Study

Understanding how transformational leaders inspire employee engagement in the face of a rapidly changing environment is an important topic to consider. It is significant because many leaders do not know how to effectively motivate employees to positively engage in their duties to an extent that is necessary to improve the organization's outcomes (Hays, 2012). This is even more important for employees within an institution, like an NC community college, where rapid

change is taking place. Rapid changes increase the complexity of the business environment, which has been proven to result in employee disengagement and poor worker production (Kushell, 2013). When leaders do a poor job engaging employees, negative outcomes can be prevalent such as: employee turnover, low worker morale, poor performance, and, in the case of a community college, low student retention (Shuck & Wollard, 2008).

Reduction of Gaps in Business Practice

The researcher sought to understand how leaders inspire engagement through a rapidly changing environment. Such a connection was not known, particularly within community colleges in the NCCCS. The main area of current literature is in drawing correlations between the rate at which transformational leaders' impact employee engagement, or by measuring how employee engagement is related to rapid change. By gaining an understanding of how leaders accomplish inspiring their employees, current and future leaders will be able to gain best practices for increasing employee engagement in the midst of rapid changes. In doing so, leaders should be able to experience the positive outcomes associated with increased employee engagement, such as higher productivity, increased profitability, higher customer satisfaction, and a higher level of employee wellbeing (Li, 2016). The goal of the researcher in this study was to provide a guide of best practices to both new and existing leaders who wish to learn from others around the NCCCS towards engaging their employees.

Implications for Biblical Integration

It is important to understand how the inspiration of employees by transformational leaders can be used to reveal and cultivate God's purposes for mankind. When transformational leaders seek to engage their followers within the workplace, one of the ways they accomplish the task is through inspirational motivation (Bottomley, Burgess, & Fox III, 2014). Ghasabeh,

Reaiche, and Soosay (2015) claims that inspirational motivation occurs when leaders inspire their followers to find and achieve a higher level of expectations, or calling, within themselves. Integrating this topic with the teachings found in the Bible, Van Duzer (2010) provided a framework on how Christian leaders should inspire others to find their calling through service. Van Duzer (2010) goes on to suggest business leaders that seek to glorify God should serve in two ways: seeking to provide goods and services to their community, and giving individuals the opportunity to utilize their God-given abilities through meaningful and creative work.

Hardy (1990) notes that every person has unique gifts, talents, and abilities that were bestowed upon them by God for the purpose of building up the community of faith and the community at large. An example of this is found in St. Peter's letter to the early church where he wrote that all Christians should "use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms" (1 Pet. 4:10). The framework that Van Duzer (2010) provided places a challenge to Christian leaders to help workers develop and find their gifts and utilize them for meaningful and creative work. Keller and Alsdorf (2012) further note that God provided purpose for work by calling mankind to serve one another in the world. Part of that service is inspiring and motivating others to develop and achieve their calling, much like a transformational leader inspires followers to achieve more than they thought possible.

Two of the many examples of this framework found in the Bible are Romans 12:4-8 and Matthew 16:17-18. First, Romans 12:4-8 describes each person as being a member of the body of Christ, with different gifts according to God's purpose. This verse qualifies the need to discover and develop gifts in order to utilize them for their given purpose. Discussing these gifts, Hardy (1990) adds that they were not given in order for man to store up fame and fortune. Instead, the gifts place an obligation upon man to use them for building up the community at

large (1990). Understanding God's purpose to provide each person with gifts and a specific calling further raises the bar for Christian leaders to help others find and achieve their purpose.

The second example from the Bible is found in Christ's interaction with Peter in Matthew 16:17-18. In that passage, Jesus modeled the transformational leadership dimension of inspirational motivation when He reinforced His call on Peter's life by saying, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah... I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (NIV). At that moment, Jesus was inspiring Peter to realize a higher calling and potential on his life than he was previously aware. Peter went on to become a great leader in the book of Acts, and spent the remainder of his life in the role of a transformational leader himself.

Relationship to Leadership

This study relates to leadership directly due to its focus on the transformational leadership style of NCCCS leaders and how they inspire employee engagement during rapidly changing environments. On a broader scale, understanding how leadership styles influence community college personnel is a very important topic in the field of business and leadership (McFadden, Miller, Sypawka, Clay, & Hoover-Plonk, 2013). Depending on the leadership style and traits a leader displays usually plays a large role in determining how employees will respond to various situations (2013). In the business of higher education, there are several emerging leadership styles including: contextual planning, servant leadership, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and visionary leadership (Jacobs, 2012). Of the styles mentioned, the transformational leadership style is quickly becoming the most prevalent in higher education leaders due to its focus on the inspiration and motivation of employees (Taylor-Sawyer, 2004).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

This research study was conducted to understand how transformational leaders in the NCCCS inspire employee engagement at their individual institutions. This topic is especially important with community colleges continuously undergoing rapid changes in the workplace environment. The researcher sought to gain an understanding of what tools, processes, or methods leaders used to inspire employees to engage in their jobs effectively. While there is a vast amount of literature on transformational leadership, and how it relates to employee engagement, further research revealed an absence of studies conducted on specific strategies or processes such leaders used to inspire their employees. This was particularly true of leaders whose workplace environments were experiencing rapid change. The researcher also found a gap in the literature that describes how transformational leaders inspire employees in community colleges in North Carolina. More specifically, a void exists in the research that tells the unique stories of how the leaders themselves personally inspired workers to remain engaged in their jobs despite rapid changes around them. Because of this gap, research was necessary to reflect how the inspiration of transformational leaders occurs in such situations, which will benefit future leaders in their attempt to solve the complex business problem that poor employee engagement can create.

In the following review of the professional and academic literature, the researcher sets the stage by first discussing the history and purpose of community colleges in general and then the community college system in North Carolina. Extensive research is provided on the transformational leadership style. This includes why such a leadership style is more preferable for employee engagement than any other style, especially to address the issues within the NCCCS. Other main areas of focus include: the history and characteristics of employee

engagement, the impact transformational leaders have on employee engagement, employee engagement in community colleges, the origin and characteristics of rapid change in organizations, the impact rapid change has on employee engagement, rapid change found in community colleges, and the impact transformational leaders have during rapidly changing environments. In the closing transition and summary section, the researcher describes how the literature ties together to reflect a need for qualitative analysis that is depicted in the next section.

Community College

Higher education has been a gateway for opportunity, economic mobility, and intellectual progress in society for centuries (Everett, 2015). Over the last hundred years, community colleges have become a big part of that gateway, expanding access to higher education, while equipping nontraditional students with the skills to impact their local job market. Zeidenberg (2008) notes that in most cases a high school degree is no longer adequate to provide employment opportunities that would support a family. However, it is also true that many individuals do not need a degree from a four-year, higher education institution to make a decent living. Many skilled jobs in the workforce require only a two-year degree and often pay very handsome salaries. At the same time, tuition at four-year colleges and universities has skyrocketed, rendering higher education out of reach for many (Everett, 2015). As a result, community colleges in general have experienced an onslaught of growth in enrollment in a very short amount of time. The American Association of Community Colleges (2014) states that roughly 45% of all individuals who seek higher education now attend a community college at some point in their educational pursuit.

With that growth, community colleges have been required to change dramatically in an attempt to remain relevant in providing the best training to their customers. The climate found in

many community colleges is saturated with financial constraints, increased expectations, and governmental mandates (Mitchell, 2012). With all the required changes, leaders must address the organizational design and structure of their college to ensure business operations are being strategically aligned in the best way possible. Such measures require inspiring employees to engage in their work through the changes to ensure effective and productive outcomes (McClenney & Dare, 2013).

History and Purpose of Community Colleges

When Harvard University was chartered in 1636, American higher education was officially born (Vaughan & Weisman, 2003). While countless other colleges and universities were started over the next few centuries, it was not until the signing of the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890 that two-year institutions became possible (Rodkin, 2011). The Morrill Acts were directly tied to the establishment of land-grant state universities that focused on agriculture and mechanical sciences, in addition to an emphasis on research. Cohen, Brawer, and Kisker (2014) report that the initial president of the University of Michigan, Henry Tappan, was the original advocate for the first two years of higher education to be conducted at a different college in order to focus more on research at the university level. In order to increase the ability of the universities to facilitate research opportunities for their students, it was thought that a lower-level form of higher education was needed after high school before students were prepared to transition to the junior and senior years, where advanced research would be conducted (2014).

In 1892, the president of Yale University, William Rainey Harper, further proposed a separate college system by expanding public high schools to six years (Rodkin, 2011). In 1901, the founding of Joliet Junior College was the first of this model, and marked the emergence of the community college concept (Rabey, 2011). The community college is any regionally

accredited not-for-profit institution, which awards an associate degree as its highest level of completion (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). As time went on, the need for community colleges grew as the percentage of individuals graduating high school rose from 30 percent in 1924 to 75 percent by 1960 (2008). By the late 1960s, comprehensive community colleges began appearing in every state as the concept brought something new to the American population that was not available before: accessible, affordable, and quality education for everyone. Between 1974 and 2007, the number of community colleges in the United States grew by approximately 17 percent from roughly 896 to over 1,045 (Provasnik & Planty, 2008). In terms of enrollment, by 2002 community colleges had just at 6.3 million students compared to the 739,811 enrolled in 1963. That is an increase of 741 percent over that time span. Over the same period, enrollment in 4-year public institutions increased by only 197 percent (2008).

Clotfelter, Ladd, Muschkin, and Vigdor (2013) assert that community colleges today have two primary purposes: training workers with the necessary technical skills for careers in their field, and providing a stepping stone to baccalaureate degrees at a university. Nevarez and Wood (2010) go a step further to describe how community colleges were designed to serve the local community where they were built. In addition to their physical location, “the mission is to provide academic programs and services, which meet the human, social, and cultural capital needs of their communities” (p. 7). Jacobs (2012) lists the missions of community colleges in terms of multiple functions including: student services, developmental education, career education, community education, and general education.

Community Colleges as a Business Organization

Community colleges are unique organizations with many of the same characteristics as a typical business. For example, they sell a product (education and knowledge) to a customer

(students) and employ a highly trained and qualified staff to facilitate the recruitment, sale, retention, and quality control of their product to customers (Myran, 2013). Much like other businesses, community colleges also compete for customers with other institutions (Duncan & Ball, 2011), and for funding with other public entities (Alexander & Drumm, 2016; Romano & Palmer, 2016). Because many community colleges are state funded based on enrollment (or number of customers they obtain), competition between neighboring communities can become especially fierce (Duncan & Ball, 2011). Similarities with other businesses also exist in how community colleges continually seek to realign business processes to utilize their resources towards efficient and sustainable outcomes (Topper & Powers, 2013). This is especially true in an economy where students' learning outcomes are constantly under the microscope making institutional efficiency more critical towards overall success (2013). Just like the business world, community colleges must educate the public through marketing and advertising to raise awareness of their economic impact in the community, and to provide further opportunities for growth (Drotos, 2012). All of these business functions are led through a distinct organizational strategy and leadership structure that provides ample opportunities for leadership development (Campbell, Syed, & Morris, 2010). These functions make it imperative that such leaders understand and implement employee engagement strategies to ensure positive outcomes are being met.

Organizational leadership structure. In the community college setting, senior leaders promote a successful organizational strategy by building a culture of high performance, articulating a vision to their followers, putting in systems to allow staff opportunities to grow, understanding factors that impact employee satisfaction, and creating an atmosphere of employee success (Brimhall, 2014). Opp and Gosetti (2014) claim the three key administrators in the

community college organization are typically the chief executive officer (CEO), or president, the chief academic officer (CAO), and the senior student development officer (SSDO). While other senior administrator positions exist, these three are the most likely to make a direct impact on the majority of the staff in a community college, and therefore control the structure and strategy in employee engagement towards achieving organizational goals. Caldwell (2016) notes that the president, CAO, and SSDO also have a critical impact on the general administration of a community college including deans, department chairs, and directors. Awan (2014) adds how imperative it is to the organizational health of a community college that these individuals build trust, create vision, and unite employees towards a common set of goals. Davis, Dent, and Wharff (2015) share the importance these positions hold in tearing down institutional silos, and effectively communicating practices throughout the organization that engage employees to reach peak performance. The following paragraphs detail the relationship each position has in designing organizational structure and affecting employee engagement.

President. The president, or CEO, of a community college is the highest senior leader within the organization who is primarily tasked with charting the direction, mission, role, and strategy of the college (Vaughan & Weisman, 2003). The president typically reports to a board of trustees, that holds the fiduciary responsibility to govern the college by shaping policy, while the president and senior staff is responsible for policy implementation (Hassan, 2008). Some of the characteristics of an active president include: effective leadership, organizational strategy, resource management, collaboration, communication, professionalism, and community college advocacy (McNair, 2015). Given the importance of the role, the president of a community college officially sets organizational design and structure, including the leadership, for all departments. It is the president's prerogative to empower leaders in the organization to

effectively manage change as it is introduced from various avenues, and to ensure the vision of the college does not collapse (Ullman, 2014). This task is something that has proven to be increasingly difficult as more rapid changes are being thrust upon community college presidents and their institutions. Duncan and Ball (2011) note that presidents need more preparation and resources before making the case for support at the local, state, and federal government levels. In terms of employee engagement, the president is indirectly involved in practices that increase worker satisfaction. However, it is through the other senior administrators that the president can encourage employee engagement strategies to be implemented across campus (Jacobs, 2012).

Chief academic officer. The chief academic officer (CAO) at a community college is a critical position that, in many cases, elevates it to a similar level of importance as the president (Anderson, Murray, & Olivarez, 2002). In a majority of community colleges, the CAO is considered the second highest-ranking official on campus, and usually reports directly to the president. Opp and Gosetti (2014) note that the primary focus of the CAO is on faculty affairs and curriculum instruction. Activities of the position include working to ensure faculty are properly developed, engaged in sound pedagogy, have ample resources to complete instruction, and continually meet the minimum standards for training and education as required by accreditation boards (2014). Eddy (2013) points out that many CAO's aspire to be a college president, and typically work to acquire the competencies necessary to take on such roles. Due to the positions focus on instruction, the CAO often has a direct responsibility for the organizational design and structure of all faculty and instructional staff. Therefore, understanding employee engagement strategies are paramount to successfully and efficiently addressing performance and goal outcomes for the CAO (Opp & Gosetti, 2014).

Senior student development officer. The senior student development officer (SSDO), also called the senior student affairs officer (SSAO), or chief student services officer (CSSO), at a community college is typically an executive-level position that manages all the staff, functions, and procedures dealing with student services (Hernandez & Hernández, 2014). This position usually reports to the president's office and/or serves on the president's cabinet, and is responsible for the overall assessment, coordination, planning, funding, and evaluation of all student and enrollment programs (2014). Tull (2014) notes the SSDO position is complex and crucial to the effective leadership of the student development division of a college. Areas usually managed by the SSDO are: admissions, financial aid, counseling services, the registrar's office, career services, recruitment, graduation, and student records (2014). Because the SSDO manages all student affairs staff and functions, it is also responsible for staff development, which includes job engagement. Knight (2014) claims that developing student affairs staff can be one of the most rewarding experiences if done correctly. However, many SSDOs fail to properly engage employees towards obtaining better outcomes, or reaching new levels. Lunceford (2014) claim that this is largely due many factors related to the rapid changes student development staff experience including internal and external policies, advancements in technology, legislative changes, and environmental factors. Opp and Gosetti (2014) add that student development staff is always under increasing pressure to enhance the student experience by better preparing them to live and work in a global economy. Such activities are taxing on support staff seeking to implement rapid change, and therefore can lead to employee disengagement (Rodking, 2011).

North Carolina Community College System

Founded in 1957 by the North Carolina General Assembly, the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) has served millions of students over its more than fifty-

year history (Wescott, 2014). The NCCCS was championed by William Dallas Herring, who was the chairman of the North Carolina State Board of Education, and a member of the Governor's Commission on Education beyond High School (2014). It was Dallas Herring's belief that community colleges should be universal in their admissions, aiming to provide unlimited learning opportunities for all the people in North Carolina (2014). Following the path of other community college systems, the idea was to create local institutions that would enable minorities, women, and lower-income groups, the chance to receive an education and find employment in their own community just like the rest of the general population (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). Clotfelter, Ladd, Muschkin, and Vigdor (2013) claim such an open-door admissions policy was needed to meet the economic development needs of the state, while providing an employment solution to North Carolina's quickly changing economy.

In 1964, the first technical institutes (upgrades from previously adopted industrial education centers) were located in Asheville (Buncombe County), Burlington (Alamance County), Fayetteville, Goldsboro (Wayne County), Wilson, Catawba County, and Forsyth County (Wiggs, 1989). Originally created to offer technical, trade, and general adult and community service programs, each college was soon authorized to offer Associate in Arts and Associate of Science degrees to students who desired to transfer to a four-year college or university (1989). In just a few short years, the NCCCS grew from only a handful of institutions to its current 58 colleges. As of 2015, the NCCCS represented the third largest state community college system nationally, with its 58 institutions spread throughout North Carolina's 100 counties (Kalleberg & Dunn, 2015). Only California, with 117, and Texas, with 64, are larger systems in the United States (2015). The system also witnessed a tremendous amount of growth, far greater than the university system (Harbour, 2012). Between 1998 and 2009, enrollment in

the NCCCS increased by 47% (Clotfelter, Ladd, Muschkin, & Vigdor, 2013). Kalleberg and Dunn (2015) reported in 2015 that one in nine residents in North Carolina were enrolled in one of the 58 community colleges, which also accounts for 43% of all higher education enrollments. With such rapid growth, the NCCCS has continually needed to address funding disparities to meet the demand.

A large percentage of the operational funding of individual colleges within the NCCCS comes from the state, with a major portion of the state funding allocated based on the college's full time equivalent (FTE) funding formula (Harbour, 2002). FTE is the NCCCS's standard for reporting enrollment and funding, and typically equates to a certain amount of scheduled class hours per year for curriculum classes (Alexander & Drumm, 2016). Since many community college students are part time, an FTE does not typically equate to headcount (2016). Because the majority of community college funding is based on enrollment, many institutions are constantly divided in their focus. Harbour (2012) notes that many community colleges focus on maintaining or growing enrollment, while also concentrating on improving the quality of their educational product and learning outcomes at the same time. With a relatively large amount of growth within a small timeframe, coupled with the economic, social, and political climate found in the country in recent years, community colleges in North Carolina will face the need for rapid changes to ensure quality and purpose are maintained (Tschechtelin, 2011).

Transactional and Transformational Leadership Theories

Literature on business is saturated with content depicting theories, styles, trends, and characteristics that define and describe the topic of leadership. Burns (1978) noted that leadership is one of the most studied and least understood phenomena in business. Over the past few decades, several advancements in research have been made to better develop leadership

outcomes and performance (Rowold, 2014). In that time, two of the most researched leadership theories has been transactional and transformational (2014). Transactional and transformational leadership, as they are known today, were both formalized in the 1970s and 80s (Rodrigues & Ferreira, 2015); however, both have much deeper roots of origin and vary in point of view or approach (Ghasabeh, Reaiche, & Soosay, 2015). As the following sections will display, these two leadership theories were included in this study because of their occurrence in higher education; more specifically community colleges. In fact, out of all major leadership theories, transactional and transformational leadership are considered more widely used by leaders in community colleges settings today than any other leadership style (Jacobs, 2012; Wilson, 2015).

Bass (1985) studied the traits and qualities of transactional and transformational leaders and concluded that they have contrasting points of view or characteristics that lead them to utilize different means of achieving organizational goals. The transformational style of leadership focuses on the inspiration, motivation, and development of followers, which has been proven to increase employee engagement even through rapid change (Bommer, Rich, & Rubin, 2005). Through the inspirational motivation component of transformational leadership, leaders are able to help employees successfully reframe their current situation and embrace change (Campbell, Syed, & Morris, 2010). While going through rapid changes, transformational leaders take responsibility for change while motivating employees toward self-actualization (2005).

Alternatively, transactional leaders display a contrasting view or approach to leadership in that they attempt to reach organizational goals through exchanges or transactions with employees (Bass, 1985). The main focus of this style is to offer rewards for good performance and praise and acknowledgement for accomplishments (Rodrigues & Ferreira, 2015). However, research has shown that transactional leaders can have a negative impact on employee

engagement if the followers are not receiving the gifts or rewards they were promised, or if they experience coworkers receiving rewards when they are not (Kelloway, Turner, Barling, & Loughlin, 2012). Because of the positive impact the transformational leadership style often has on employee engagement, it was chosen to be the focal point of this study. However, since Bass (1985) included both transactional and transformational leadership styles in his research, and both styles have components that are included on the multifactor leadership questionnaire used in this study, the researcher chose to include a section on the transactional style of leadership in this review of the academic literature. Further, research on both leadership styles were provided since they offer contrasting views or characteristics that the researcher felt were important to understand in order to validate why the inspirational motivation component of transformational leadership is considered ideal for inspiring employee engagement through rapid change.

Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership is a style defined by the concept that leaders provide their employees what they want in exchange for giving something in return (Washington, 2007). The exchange that takes place is a transaction between leader and employee, and only exists if the employee completes a task correctly and on time (Bass, 1985). Because the concept features positive and negative reinforcement, it is considered a telling leadership style (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999). Such styles feature a high level of structure, and typically require managerial monitoring and instruction. Due to its structure, transactional leadership posits that employees are not self-motivated, and need guidance to complete their tasks (1999). The leadership approach has been known to stymie employee innovation because leaders stress staying within organizational responsibilities and maintaining status quo (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Origins of transactional leadership. The history of transactional leadership can be traced back to the 20th-century German sociologist, Max Weber, who divided leadership into three categories: charismatic, rational (legal or bureaucratic), and traditional (Weber, 1949). In his definition of the term, Weber (1949) described leadership as “the exercise of control on the basis of knowledge.” His concept of rational-legal order included a system where rules were expected to be obeyed and followed by subordinates and enforced by a governing body. Weber’s rational-legal theory would later be referred to as transactional leadership by James MacGregor Burns, who furthered the concepts of both transactional and transformational leadership (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987).

In his book *Leadership*, Burns (1978) defined transactional leadership as a style that occurs when one person seeks out contact with others with a purpose of exchanging something of value. The main goal of a leader who exhibited this style was to control subordinates through pushing an exchange of rewards for positive performance. Yukl (1981) later noted that the exchange between a transactional leader and subordinates represented a reciprocal relationship where both parties received something of value. Kellerman (1984) then added how important it was for followers to do what the leaders wanted, since it was in their best interest. Therefore, to be effective leaders practicing the transactional style, individuals need to constantly respond to their follower’s actions, while changing expectations in the process. Bass (1985) furthered Burn’s (1978) concept to a greater level, by contrasting it with the transformational leadership style. That was accomplished by expounding upon the traits or characteristics of both styles, and how they impacted the follower relationship and outcomes.

Components of transactional leadership. Bass (1990) postulated that there are three specific components to transactional leadership that can be found in organizations. Those three

are: contingent reward, active management by exception, and passive management by exception, also called laissez-faire. While all three components are still highly considered decades later, some researchers lump laissez-faire together with passive management by exception, while others separate it out as an entirely different leadership style (Zareen, Razzaq, & Mujtaba, 2015). All components highlight a transaction that occurs between leaders and their followers, whether through reward and punishments, active monitoring, or passive avoidance (Bass & Avolio, 1994). The following sections will take a closer look at each.

Contingent reward. The first component of transactional leadership is contingent reward. Judge and Piccolo (2004) claim that contingent reward is the most common component of the transactional style. Contingent reward characterizes managers who set goals for their subordinates and then offers rewards for good performance and praise and acknowledgement for accomplishments (Rodrigues & Ferreira, 2015). With contingent reward, the emphasis of leaders is to stimulate their followers by task motivation (Breevaart et al., 2014). Examples of rewards could be incentive material such as bonuses, verbal praise, or gifts. The focus behind the style is that workers will appreciate the reward system, which will motivate them to work harder and complete their tasks without any issues (2014).

While contingent reward may be the most common component of the transactional style, Brahim, Ridić, and Jukić (2015) claim that it has been proven to have a negative impact on the performance and engagement of workers over time if leaders fail in their duty to follow through. For example, if a leader who is practicing the contingent reward component of transactional leadership becomes inconsistent with keeping promises of rewards to employees, it will negatively impact the trust an employee has in that leader (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). In such cases, employees quickly come to view their superiors as ineffective when they do not deliver

(Brahim, Ridić, & Jukić, 2015). Another reason leaders who practice this style become ineffective is the negative connotations that come as a result of poor quality work. Zareen, Razzaq, and Mujtaba (2015) note that supervisors using contingent reward often exhibit a negative rewarding approach in the form of correction, criticism, coercion, and other forms of punishment. When this method is used with negative connotations, it has been shown to promote disengagement among workers (2015).

Management-by-exception. The second component of transactional leadership is management-by-exception. In this component, leaders are found to actively monitor the work of their subordinates. In other words, managers only pay attention to activities or processes that are an exception or deviation from the general rule (Spinelli, 2006). While the contingent reward component of transactional leadership is mostly considered a positive one, management-by-exception is considered to be negative (Kelloway, Turner, Barling, & Loughlin, 2012). It is further broken down into two areas that separate the component into both active and passive exceptions.

Active management-by-exception. Active management by exception happens when leaders direct their attention on the errors or mistakes of followers (2012). In this process leaders set parameters or objectives to be followed by subordinates, much like the goals set by those transactional leaders displaying the contingent reward style. However, if the leader is made aware of an exception to the process that causes issues with performance, the exception is elevated to senior management, and the person responsible is confronted (Spinelli, 2006). Next, the leader will take charge and work to solve the problem as quickly as possible, while making sure the responsible party is cited for any miscues. Bass (1985) claims that active management by exception has the advantage of finding problems or exceptions to processes very quickly;

however, a disadvantage is the connotation it gives to the followers who are receiving the negative feedback. This style of leadership can also quickly deflate otherwise good employees for making even a small mistake. From an employee engagement standpoint, anything that demotivates employees from engaging in work can have a detrimental impact on their ability to perform at a high level again (Jha & Kumar, 2016).

Passive management-by-exception. The last component of transactional leadership is known as passive management by exception. This component, also known as laissez-faire leadership, occurs when leaders only intervene when certain standards are not being met or when overall performance is not meeting the expectations (Sharma & Singh, 2013). Yet another name for the style is the hands off approach because the leader provides little or no direction while giving followers a generous amount of freedom (2013). Leaders who exhibit this style are frequently found to avoid confrontation of any kind, and further separate themselves from followers while leading with ambiguity (Skogstad, Hetland, Glasø, & Einarsen, 2014). Bass and Avolio (1993) claim that this style the most ineffective among all major forms of leadership.

Shortcomings of transactional leadership. While transactional leadership can produce positive results, it often fails when leaders are unable to deliver rewards for their employee's positive behaviors (Bass, 1985). In fact, the theory assumes that everyone is rational, disregarding emotions and values. Kuhnert and Lewis (1987) assert that the transactional style of leadership also assumes people will always be responsive and motivated by a system of rewards and punishments. While it may be easier on a leader to issue rewards and punishments, such treatment of employees has been found to create destructive competition within organizations, which can damage the internal environment (Kelloway, Turner, Barling, & Loughlin, 2012). The transactional leadership style can have a negative impact on employee

engagement if the followers are not receiving the gifts or rewards they were promised, or if they experience coworkers receiving rewards when they are not. Srivalli and Kanta (2016) note that job satisfaction and employee commitment are directly tied to employee engagement. Therefore, leaders should not practice any component of a leadership style that may end up disengaging their employees.

Another shortcoming of the transactional style is its dependence on certain leaders who are viewed as the primary source of power (Skogstad, Hetland, Glasø, & Einarsen, 2014). If something were to happen to an individual within an organization that practices the authoritarian power of transactional leadership, such as a retirement or job change, it can have a negative impact on the followers. It can also be difficult to replace such a leader, especially if the organization has grown dependent the services they provide (2014). Anyone who replaces the transactional leader may or may not carry on the predecessor's promises of certain rewards, which could hinder worker morale, or cause a disengagement in work.

While the transactional leadership style can have the appearance of being well designed due to its dependency on rules, it leaves many employees without an ability to grow or find new solutions to problems (Bass, 1990). Individuals who are on the receiving end of the transactions are regularly discouraged from being creative, as such behavior would cause them to stick out or appear to be breaking the rules. For this very reason, a transactional leadership model is not generally recommended in a higher education setting where creativity and innovation are desired (Jacobs, 2012). While a transactional style may be advantageous when an organization is in a crisis due to its strict rules and adherence to policy, it is not nearly as effective during environments that are rapidly changing (Cloud, 2010). Rapidly changing environments typically involve the need for creativity to help solve various problems. In many cases, such as in higher

education, it is considered insufficient in helping both leaders and followers realize their full potential.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is one of many styles of leadership found in modern scholarly writing; however, it is one of only a few that focuses on the transformational ability of a leader to inspire followers to reach new heights (Bass, 1990). Yukl (2010) defines transformational leadership as the “terms of traits, behaviors, influence, interaction patterns, role relationships, and occupation of an administrative position” (p. 2). Judge and Piccolo (2004) claims that more studies have been conducted on the transformational leadership style than all other leadership styles combined, making it the most popular theory in leadership literature. Unlike transactional leaders who focus on a give and take relationship filled with rewards for effort, a transformational leader provides vision, communicates high expectations, promotes intelligence, and gives personal attention, while treating everyone with respect (Bass, 1990). They also seek to raise the awareness of how important outcomes are to followers and how to reach those outcomes by going beyond self-interests through inspiration (Bass, 1997). The following paragraphs will explore the seminal works of transformational leadership, with special attention to how such leaders inspire followers.

Origins of transformational leadership. The concept of transformational leadership was originally postulated by Downton (1973) who first used the term while describing the use of charismatic power used by leaders to inspire others (Wilkinson, 1974). However, the transformational leadership style did not gain popularity in the field until it was later researched by Burns (1978). Burns (1978) notes that transformational leadership is a process where leaders and their followers assist one another towards advancing to a higher level of motivation. Burns

(1978) also asserts that the function of leadership is to engage followers, not merely to activate them. He uses the transformational leadership concept to describe political leaders, such as former President Franklin Roosevelt, based on the transformational programs they introduced. Burns (1978) approach was to label transformational leaders as those who lead by example, while working towards a vision that benefits the entire team or organization.

Transformational leadership was further advanced and developed by Bass (1985) who brought back the concept of charisma used by Downton (1973), along with the factors of individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation to describe how leaders elevate the goals of subordinate's confidence in their ability to go beyond expectations. Bass (1985) also notes how followers of a transformational leader typically work harder than expected, and display traits such as trust, admiration, respect, and loyalty for their leader. Such behavior was likely a result of the leaders drive to model integrity and fairness while advocating for followers to obtain a high level of performance. Through many studies researchers have observed transformational leaders giving their followers a sense of confidence by offering advice, recognition, and support while encouraging self-development (1985). Researchers also observed how the transformational leaders inspired motivation and awareness among their employees by developing a high level of trust through being accessible and offering a listening ear to issues.

Components of transformational leadership. Over years of research, the transformational style has continued to be redefined and updated as more knowledge and data has been made available. For example, Ho (2016) notes how many recent studies are beginning to focus on relationships between the transformational leadership style and employee job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee engagement and self-esteem. Conducting studies that correlate employee traits with characteristics of leadership styles has

proven that many individuals fall under one specific component of transformational leadership. Bass (1985, 1997) identified four components or elements to a transformational leader, which underline the transformational leadership style. Those elements are: intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence (Bass, 1997).

Intellectual stimulation. The first of four areas addressed in transformational leadership is intellectual stimulation. Intellectual stimulation occurs when a transformational leader causes followers to rethink existing issues in new ways, or to redefine their perceptions based on new information (Bass, 1985). Bass, Avolio, and Atwater (1996) claim the transformational leader practicing intellectual stimulation encourages creativity and solving problems. Followers are pushed to view issues through a different angle and come up with original ideas (Yukl, 2010). As an outcome, there is an expectation to reflect a higher level of trust, respect, and esteem (Bass, Avolio, & Atwater, 1996). Mangum (2013) adds that intellectual stimulation involves listening and helping individuals with fulfilling their goals, while also increasing the personal relationship between the follower and the leader. Once intellectual stimulation is operating efficiently, it will likely increase the productivity of that individual, which can correlate to higher employee engagement.

Inspirational motivation. The second component of transformational leadership is inspirational motivation. Inspirational motivation involves the ability of a leader to inspire or elevate the emotions of followers (Bass, 1985). The key word in this component is inspire, which focuses on the stimulation or influence leaders have on their human assets, thereby setting a higher level of desired expectation to accomplish objectives (Avolio, Waldman, & Yammarino, 1991). Judge and Piccolo (2004) note that transformational leaders who exhibit inspirational motivation articulate an appealing vision that inspires their followers. Such leaders are often

found to challenge their employees by setting high standards, communicating future goals, and providing the opportunity to participate in meaningful tasks (2004). This type of transformational leader can be observed building relationships and creating bonds with followers for the purpose sharing personal values to set a common ground (Washington, 2007).

Individualized consideration. The third component of transformational leadership is individualized consideration. Bass (1985) claims individualized consideration occurs when a transformational leader orients development efforts towards followers on a one-to-one basis. The leader takes a special interest in evaluating the potential of followers, in their current and possible future position within the organization. Then, the leader works to assign tasks or duties that will act as motivators to engage the follower while satisfying immediate organizational needs as well (1985). This component of transformational leadership focuses on treating followers differently, but equitably, on a one-to-one basis (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Ghasabeh, Reaiche, and Soosay (2015) notes that individualized consideration focuses on determining the individual needs of employees and empowering them in order to build a climate of learning. Leaders practicing individualized consideration will often provide followers with coaching, mentoring, and growth opportunities, where they can individually develop to realize their true potential (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999).

Idealized influence. The final component of transformational leadership is idealized influence. Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) note that idealized influence characterizes a transformational leader who is envisioning, confident, and sets high standards for emulation. Such leaders develop followers in order to gain a higher level of autonomy and control, instead of attempting to achieve a personal agenda (Freeborough, 2012). Bass (1990) originally called this component charisma, which offers vision, instills pride, and gains respect and trust. Bass

(1985) claims that charisma is the most important component of transformational leadership due to its focus on making followers enthusiastic towards their positions. Charismatic leaders motivate through strong relationships that draw their followers in by establishing a standard or ideal model for them to emulate.

Determining Leadership Style

The transformational leadership style can be readily identified using surveys and measurement devices. The most commonly used device for transformational leadership is the multifactor leadership questionnaire (Rodrigues & Ferreira, 2015). However, other assessments exist that help determine leadership style, behaviors, characteristics, and traits. The following list includes information on the leadership assessments most popular in the business community. Each of the following has been proven effective, and are readily available for use through various vendor websites.

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire. The multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ) was originally a 73-question instrument developed by Bass (1985) which identified both transactional and transformational leadership traits. The original measurement device was based on the six-factor model proposed by Bass (1985) and a seventh factor in laissez-faire leadership. In all, it measured four transformational components (charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration); two transactional components (contingent reward, and management-by-exception); and laissez-fair leadership. Avolio, Bass, and Jung (1999) note that the transactional component of management-by-exception was later split into both passive and active forms, with the laissez-faire leadership style often tied into the passive management-by-exception style.

The latest MLQ 5X survey includes 45 questions/items that are each related to one of the current factors found in transformational or transactional leadership. Participants rate each item on a 5-point Likert scale based on how frequent or infrequently the leader engages in the activity listed, from never (0) to frequently (4) (Rodrigues & Ferreira, 2015). As the transformational and transactional models of leadership have changed over the years, the current MLQ 5X survey includes eight total relevant factors. The five identified transformational factors are: idealized influence (broken into two parts including idealized attributes (IA), and idealized behaviors (IB)), inspirational motivation (IM), intellectual stimulation (IS), and individualized consideration (IC). The two transactional factors include contingent reward (CR), and active management-by-exception (MBEA). The final two factors include passive-avoidant leadership (MBEP), and laissez-faire (LF) (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

Leadership Practices Inventory. While the MLQ helps identify factors that determine whether a leader is transactional or transformational, the leadership practices inventory (LPI) assists leaders in determining what behaviors they practice most often (Zorn & Violanti, 1993). The LPI is a 30-item questionnaire created by Kouzes and Posner (1987) that lists various behaviors and asks leaders to rate their engagement in each from one to five. The questionnaire includes five practices and 10 commitments that attempt to characterize leaders when they are performing at their highest level. The questionnaire is meant to assist leaders in understanding which of the behaviors they practice will help them in their pursuit to inspire others to reach new goals (1987).

Other leadership measurement tools. Outside of the MLQ and LPI, there are many other leadership measurement tools. While they have benefited many individuals for years, they do not necessarily point to a leadership style, such as transformational. However, the following

two styles do bear mentioning as they seek to assist leaders in understanding leadership behaviors and attitudes. Such a concept was instrumental in the eventual conclusion that leadership behavior patterns are fairly consistent in determining an overarching style and its effectiveness towards inspiring followers (Zorn & Violanti, 1993).

Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire. The leadership behavior description questionnaire (LBDQ) was developed in the 1940s and 50s at Ohio State University by researchers who sought to determine what behaviors made an effective leader (Zorn & Violanti, 1993). The measure was originally created as a 40-question instrument and considered two types of behavior: consideration and initiating structure (Hemphill, 1950). Yukl (1989) asserts that a leader who shows consideration for followers is one that is supportive, shows concern, and invests in their general welfare. Initiating structure involves the leader working with a group to help followers obtain organizational goals. Once a participant completed the LBDQ, they were classified in one of four possible quadrants that represented a personal level of consideration and initiating structure (Zorn & Violanti, 1993). While the questionnaire has been modified throughout the years, its main purpose remains to identify leadership behaviors and attitudes rather than a traditional style.

Managerial Grid. The managerial grid is a questionnaire developed by Blake and Mouton (1964, 1970), which originally identified five leadership styles based on attitudes toward task and relational issues. The grid is made up of six items that represent various parts of leadership such as: decisions, convictions, conflict, temper, effort, and humor (Zorn & Violanti, 1993). Each part includes five behaviors that the participant will be ranked on, with a score of 1 meaning they are least likely to engage in such behaviors, and 5 meaning they are most likely to engage in such behaviors (1993). Based on the results of the rankings the leader will obtain a

score for each style, which will reveal the dominate leadership style they possess. McKee and Carlson (1999) updated the managerial grid to include seven leadership styles, which include: the indifferent, the accommodating, the dictatorial, the status quo, the sound, the opportunistic, and the paternalistic.

Transformational Leadership Style in Community College Leaders

The transformational leadership style is widely considered one of the most used leadership styles in modern day simply because those who practice it seek to transform, motivate, inspire, and empower followers (Hassan, 2008). Reid-Bunch (2006) claims that approximately 86% of all community college presidents practice the transformational leadership style. The American Association of Community Colleges (AACCC) (2005) notes “an effective community college leader works ethically to set high standards for self and others, continuously improve self and surroundings, demonstrate accountability to and for the institution, and ensure the long-term viability of the college and community” (p. 5). Unlike transactional leaders who are focused on performance and exchanges based on rewards, transformational leaders in higher education are focused on coaching employees to realize their potential (Basham, 2012). While some leaders reflect the transformational style more than others, the majority of those who practice it report positive results in the performance and engagement of their followers (Freeborough, 2012).

Advantages of transformational leadership in community colleges. Transformational leadership used within community colleges has many advantages. For example, using the style of leadership helps identify and satisfy potential needs from followers (Heiser, 2003). The leadership style goes beyond meeting just basic needs and seeks to raise them to higher levels of motivation and inspiration (Bass, 1985). Roueche, Baker III, and Rose (1989) claim that there

are five major themes that characterize community college leaders as transformational: vision, influence orientation, people orientation, motivational orientation, and values orientation. Each of the themes contain practices leaders use to achieve better performance, higher outcomes, and reach new potential.

Another advantage of transformational leadership in community colleges is its use in developing employees. McFadden, Miller, Sypawka, Clay, and Hoover-Plonk (2013) note the need for leadership development within the North Carolina Community College System today in order to train and replace the aging and retiring workforce. While other styles can promote leadership development, the transformational style is best suited to provide training and succession planning for future leaders (Gaan & Bhoon, 2012). Additional advantages include: improving the workforce, leadership organization, advanced training and development, and increasing employee productivity and morale (2012).

The transformational leadership style can lead to a much higher level of employee engagement (Freeborough, 2012). This is often attributed to higher job satisfaction due to renewed career interest, the establishment of clearly communicated goals, and the personal motivation leaders provide to followers by inspiring them to accomplish more than they envisioned (2012). While higher employee engagement can be achieved using the transformational leadership style, more research is needed to discover how that is accomplished. More specifically, research is needed to reflect how leaders are inspiring a higher level of engagement in the unique environment of rapid change found in community colleges in North Carolina.

Criticisms of transformational leadership in community colleges. Bass (1998) describes a form of transformational leadership that exists, called pseudo-transformational

leadership, which acts as an opposite replica of a true transformational leader. In the pseudo-transformational leadership style, a leader practices motivating followers through encouragement and support as normal; however, the leader accomplishes the goal through self-interest to achieve a personal agenda (1998). Several examples of this pseudo-style exist, which can make it very difficult to determine if leaders are actually practicing true transformation, or seeking to fulfill their own needs. Taylor-Sawyer (2004) notes that leaders within the community college setting can often hide behind the transformational leadership style to get what they want. If a leader's values are self-serving, they may appear to inspire and motivate employees for good, but in reality, they may be focused on promoting a personal agenda at the expense of others (2004). Other critics of the transformational leadership style argue that its practice discourages desirable employee outcomes such as task performance (Ho, 2016). This argument is based on the assumption that employees who are continuously inspired and motivated to reach higher goals will lose their ability to focus on current tasks and instead spend more time and resources looking ahead.

In the community college system, several potential issues exist that could pose a threat to transformational leadership styles (Basham, 2012). Some examples of threats include: tenured staff reluctant to change, a lack of dedicated personnel who are passionate about higher education, traditional and historical practices viewed as sacred, a lack of vision to improve the educational environment, stakeholders' influence in wanting to maintain status quo, and a reduction in state or other governmental funding to the college that restricts proper change. Mangum (2013) reports that in such cases, the community college senior leadership staff (president, CAO, SSDO) will need to step in and develop a strategic plan to overcome the obstacles and mentor those who have the ability to become effective leaders.

Employee Engagement

Motivating employees to engage in their work is a fundamental task every leader must master in order for an organization to perform at the highest level (Hays, 2012). When people are engaged they invest in their work at a higher rate and with more energy and enthusiasm (Albrecht, 2010). Srivalli and Kanta (2016) note that employee engagement is a key component in both human resource development and leadership alike, as it involves the human capital investment of a company. Employees can become disengaged in work if they are not properly inspired or motivated to perform their duties to the best of their abilities (2016). When employees disengage, they do not deploy emotions, energies, or passions for conducting their duties (Albrecht, 2010). Vast research has proven a positive correlation between employee engagement and possible business outcomes; including academic and higher education environments (Travisano, 2016). The following information reviewed the seminal works of employee engagement, including the components that have been correlated with its measurement. Information included conditions and outcomes related to employee engagement, how transformational leaders impact engagement, and what employee engagement entails in the community college environment.

History of Employee Engagement

The term and concept of employee engagement was originally proposed in an academic journal by Kahn (1990), who sought to study the psychological conditions of individuals related to their work environment. However, before the term itself, employee engagement had much deeper roots in the study of human motivation. Dwight D. Eisenhower once said, "Motivation is the art of getting people to do what you want them to do because they want to do it" (Hays, 2012, p. 65). In the early to mid-1900s, behavioral scientists Steiner and Berelson (1964) led the study

of motivation in employees by focusing on behaviors that caused various outcomes. Steiner and Berelson (1964) sought to understand how motivation in a job tied to worker performance. After years of study, they concluded that motivation was not directly observable, but rather an internal state, which leads to sustained behavior (1964). However, this behavior alone did not explain why some employees were seemingly motivated to do their work, but not satisfied with the outcomes.

When Kahn (1990) began his study on psychological conditions of employees in the workplace, his goal was to understand what conditions motivated people to personally engage in work or disengage and withdraw from their duties (Leeds & Nierle, 2014). For Kahn (1990), understanding motivation was not enough. He sought to know what caused employees to engage their energy into physical, cognitive, and emotional labors. Kahn (1990) identified three psychological conditions that directly influence the engagement or disengagement of employees. Those conditions were: meaningfulness, safety, and availability (1990).

Meaningfulness. Kahn's (1990) first condition was psychological meaningfulness, which could be viewed as "a feeling that one is receiving a return on investments of one's self in a currency of physical, cognitive, or emotional energy" (p. 703). Shuck and Wollard (2010) later noted the use of meaningfulness was a sense of return employees gained after investing time and effort into their work. When employees invest and commit their personal resources into their work, given the right environment, they can often find a meaningful return on that investment. Kahn (1990) asserted that workers often varied their personal engagements based on how they perceived the benefits or meaning within their situations. People also experience meaningfulness when they felt worthwhile, useful, and valuable – as though they made a difference and were not being taken for granted (1990).

Through various research studies on employee engagement, there are two methods found which depict how employers foster meaningfulness in their employees, and the return employees receive. Jha and Kumar (2016) noted how organizations that encourage and motivate employees by showing respect, appreciation, and value, often create psychological conditions of meaningfulness. Such transformational interactions include giving employees opportunities and training to further sharpen their skills, while improving overall performance and abilities. Meaningful value is also added when employers provide performance feedback for growth and development through talent management programs. Therefore, employees benefiting from such interactions gain a return of being educated, trained, and inspired to engage in their work on a higher level.

Alternatively, another method companies use to foster meaningfulness is by offering incentives, such as pay increases, job security, peer recognition, or rewards (Saks & Gruman, 2014). This method is more transactional in nature, and requires a give and take relationship between the employer and the employee. While employees benefiting from this system gain rewards as a return for their behavior, there is equal chance they will not be rewarded if a certain level of engagement or performance is not achieved. Therefore, the risk in using incentives and rewards exclusively to create a meaningful employee experience is found when either party is unable to live up to expectations (Srivalli & Kanta, 2016). Saks and Gruman (2014) add that a lack of meaningfulness in the workplace often occurs when employees perceive little is expected of them, or they are not being utilized to their full potential. Li (2016) later concluded that employees either engage or disengage in work based on their perception of whether the work is leading to meaningful change and positive outcomes, or negative outcomes.

Safety. Kahn (1990) identified safety as a second element to employee engagement, which he defined as a “sense of being able to show and employ self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career” (p. 703). Safety is a basic need in Maslow’s Hierarchy, and can be considered a prerequisite to employee engagement (Kahn & Heaphy, 2013). Travisano (2016) adds that employees need to feel safe in the work environment in order to fully engage in their duties without fear of injury. They also must believe their thoughts and feelings can be expressed to superiors without fear of repercussion or discipline (Shuck, 2011). Research has shown that employees who fear negative consequences to their employment status, self-image, or careers often disengage in their jobs (2011). Conversely, employees who experience a greater amount of safety tend to engage in their work roles at a much higher level (Saks & Gruman, 2014).

Availability. A third condition to employee engagement is availability. Kahn (1990) claims that psychological availability is “the sense of having the physical, emotional, or psychological resources to personally engage at a particular moment” (p. 714). The condition of availability more importantly focuses on how available or ready people are to personally engage in work given the distractions they may be experiencing in their social and work lives (Li, 2016). Research studies have shown a strong correlation between the level of engagement in employees and the availability of resources at their disposal, which influenced experiences and involvement with work assignments (2016). Resources in this regard can include wellness or mental health counseling to deal with burnout, professional development opportunities to enhance growth, or coaching experiences to promote increased job knowledge and abilities (2016). Yadav (2016) adds that cognitive availability in the workplace refers to the amount of time employees spend thinking about their role or being absorbed in the job duties. This thinking time often leads to a

greater amount of focus on roles, which can have a positive impact on the employees' ability to perform. However, too much absorption on roles can lead to burnout, which negatively impacts performance, and may eventually lead to disengagement and job dissatisfaction (2016).

Other Seminal Research in Employee Engagement

Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) pioneered reaching across academic boundaries to study how engagement connected with employee burnout. In 2006, Saks became the first researcher to test antecedents and consequences to employee engagement in academic literature. This was done by the development of a six-item scale used to measure job engagement and a six-item scale to measure organizational engagement (Saks, 2006). That scale led to many other instruments being developed over the years, including an 18-item scale that included six items to measure Kahn's original three dimensions (physical, cognitive, and emotional) (Saks & Gruman, 2014). Macey and Schneider (2008) conducted research that conceptualized trait, state, and behavioral engagement as separate but related constructs, which paralleled previous research by Shuck and Wollard (2010). Macey and Schneider (2008) claimed employee engagement in the workplace is defined by three categories: job design attributes, the presence of a transformational leader, and the presence of a transformational leader. They further pioneered research in the area of employee engagement, and were one of the original sources to connect it with transformational leadership. Albrecht (2010) later observed how transformational leaders positively influenced engagement among their workers. Information on the literature relating transformational leadership and employee engagement has also been provided in this study.

Outcomes of Employee Engagement

Since its inception, employee engagement has garnered numerous studies, been the focal point of countless management consulting firms, and attracted a plethora of research with an

attempt to understand its relationship between organizational support and workplace outcomes (Yadav, 2016). Corporate executives have taken a greater interest in employee engagement than the past since it has been linked to outcomes that can either benefit or hurt an organization (Ketter, 2008). While many outcomes provide only nominal advantages for the workplace, there are four that are most pivotal to a company's success. Those are: organizational performance, productivity, customer satisfaction, and employee retention (2008).

Organizational performance. The first outcome that is tied to employee engagement is organizational performance. Ketter (2008) asserted that the crux of engagement is to create an environment where people do not feel abused, misused, overused, or underused. Individuals who feel a part of that type of environment often disengage from responsibilities that negatively impact their organizational performance. Therefore, it is important for a company contemplating organizational changes to consider how the changes may impact employee engagement, which directly ties to performance. Hays (2012) notes that if employees' engagement level changes, so will their level of performance within the organization. One specific research finding suggests that when employees go from being disengaged to being highly engaged, their productivity level increases by 20 percent (Ketter, 2008). One way to accomplish this is to invest in high-level professional development opportunities with employees (Jha & Kumar, 2016). While such measures could be costly, they provide a positive outcome for employers if they become more engaged through the process. Professional development opportunities could include on-the-job training to enhance skills, education to learn a new skill for cross-training possibilities, or training on intrinsic factors such as safety (2016). Some companies may even choose to invest in executive coaching or succession planning measures for their leaders (Ketter, 2008). The more opportunities, the more likely organizational performance will increase.

Productivity. Research has concluded that employee engagement is directly related to workplace productivity (Cattew, Flynn, & Vonderhorst, 2007). That should come as no surprise given that workers who are focused and satisfied with their duties find contentment in their jobs and therefore work harder and get more accomplished than those who are not satisfied. Jha and Kumar (2016) note that understanding how engagement links to productivity is critical to the mission of a company. Leaders who want to increase their company's performance need to utilize techniques that invest in human capital. Srivalli and Kanta (2016) offer a few ideas on how organizations can support their employees in order to increase productivity. First, companies should elevate the level of supervisor support employees receive in their jobs. Supervisor support can include further training, flexibility within the job, and more responsibility to aid the organization (2016). Another investment should be in workplace environment. Organizations that provide an environment that includes high engagement, safety, and cleanliness for their employees increase the likelihood those employees will engage in their jobs and become more productive (2016). Creating a positive working environment can also foster learning. Travisano (2016) claims organizations that create a supportive environment, open the door for more productive professional development opportunities, increase the level of training effectiveness, and decrease the likelihood an employee will spend unnecessary time and energy trying to achieve incorrect outcomes.

Customer satisfaction. Another outcome of employee engagement is customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is relevant to this study because it is an outcome many organization hope to achieve, which is possible through a highly engaged workforce. Saks and Gruman (2014) claim organizations experience higher profitability, productivity, and customer satisfaction when its employees are engaged in their work. Shuck and Wollard (2010) also

discuss this concept, and claim that engaged employees receive higher customer satisfaction reviews and generate increased profits than workers who admit to workplace dissatisfaction. Yadav (2016) notes that a positive correlation exists between the level an employee is engaged in work and the level customers rate being satisfied with the service they received from that employee. In the community college setting, high customer satisfaction is equated to high student satisfaction, such as positive enrollment experiences, successful completion of a degree program, or the overall student experience (Awan, 2014). With this being the case, it is critical that community college leaders strive to increase employee engagement so student customers remain satisfied and continue their educational pursuits.

Employee retention. Success is no longer defined by what a company owns or builds; rather, it is tied to the resources and talent that can be accessed and retained (Ansberry, 2003). Cascio (2006) notes that the resources and talent every company should invest in is human capital. Organizations that choose to invest in their workers have been shown to exhibit a much higher rate of satisfaction among its staff, which in turn leads to retention and engagement (Richman, Civian, Shannon, Hill, & Brennan, 2008). Relating this information to higher education, community colleges that invest in the development of their faculty and staff often see sharp increases in employee retention, which also ties back to overall engagement (Clotfelter, Ladd, Muschkin, & Vigdor, 2013). Numerous studies have shown that when employees perceive strong organizational support on their behalf, they are more likely to stay engaged in work despite an uneasy work environment (Richman et al., 2008). Ketter (2008) asserts that employee turnover is often extremely low at companies that work to engage workers by inspiring them to reach their potential. Because engagement is a rational and emotional commitment it is often not affected by outside circumstances if the employee feels valued and needed (2008).

Therefore, companies seeking to continually retain employees should seek to understand what motivating factors will engage workers despite any setbacks (Richman et al., 2008).

Alternatively, companies who choose not to invest in employees often find their retention efforts to be futile.

The Impact of the Transformational Leadership Style on Employee Engagement

The transformational leadership style contains many attributes that make its usage within the workplace a prime environment for employee engagement (Gaan & Bhoon, 2012).

Transformational leaders provide rich and meaningful opportunities for employees by identifying areas of growth and potential that are not characterized by other leadership styles (Bommer, Rich, & Rubin, 2005). When Macey and Schneider (2008) first tied transformational leadership to employee engagement, it was postulated that the two were positively connected. However, it was not until Zhu, Avolio, and Walumbwa (2009) studied the relationship between the two that a positive correlation was found, along with the characteristics of self-efficacy, hope, optimism, resilience, and self-monitoring (Li, 2016). The use of transformational leadership is now understood to be a catalyst for employee engagement within the workplace, with organizational commitment, trust, and goal obtainment being some of its best attributes among employees (Albrecht, 2010).

Organizational commitment. Transformational leaders develop strong emotional bonds with followers through the use of skills such as visioning and impression management skills (Li, 2016). It is through these bonds that employees develop a strong commitment to an organization, which in turn brings a heightened level of engagement. Saks and Gruman (2014) claim that organizational commitment is an emotional attachment to an organization, which increases the likelihood of embracing change regardless of the circumstances. One way these

bonds are formed is when transformational leaders create a positive organizational climate, which contributes to higher worker morale and a stronger sense to commitment (Gaan & Bhoon, 2012). Gaan and Bhoon (2012) also add that transformational leaders promote teamwork and bring positive reinforcement to an organization. Through the camaraderie with fellow workers, employees feel a sense of belonging, or community with their company that is difficult to break.

Employee trust. Next, transformational leaders inspire employee trust and integrity within the workplace. Gaan and Bhoon (2012) claim that trust and integrity, combined with pride in the company, camaraderie, and relationship with one's manager, are positive attributes that every employee seeks. Because transformational leaders inspire their followers to reach higher within themselves than ever thought possible, employees often develop a trust with transformational leaders that is not available with other leadership styles. This trust is a product of faith in a leader to provide the resources necessary to allow the employee to grow and develop as an individual (McWade, 2014).

Employee goal obtainment. Another impact transformational leadership has on employee engagement is goal obtainment. When surveyed, one of the most important attributes an employee looks for in a job is an organization that cares about worker well-being and strongly considers goals and values (Srivalli & Kanta, 2016). Workers want to know the company not only recognizes their goals, they want an organization that works to help them obtain them. Gaan and Bhoon (2012) note that goal setting and goal obtainment are among the primary functions transformational leaders have on their followers. Albrecht (2010) asserts that transformational leaders help employees obtain their goals by creating a clear vision for the team, while positively challenging and encouraging everyone to work together to reach

objectives. This is done through the active, inspirational motivating of the leaders, who act as a model for how engagement should be accomplished (2010).

Employee Engagement in Community Colleges

Numerous studies have been conducted that examine leadership within community colleges, including the leadership style and traits of presidents, conditions that support organizational change, and the responsibilities of senior leadership (Awan, 2014). However, when it comes to employee engagement, particularly through rapid change, there is little to no research to help leaders understand the practice. Thirolf (2017) claims faculty engagement is a topic that deserves more scholarly attention; however, even though research has shown the benefits of a highly motivated and engaged staff, little has been done to advance the topic. Kadlec and Rowlett (2014) note that employee engagement in community colleges is not completely void in literature; however, most of the information available speaks to why engagement is important, or what impact it can have on the organization. Despite the gaps, there are positive outcomes of employee engagement that are worth noting.

Positive outcomes of employee engagement in community colleges. The first positive outcome of employee engagement is the impact it has on student success. Awan (2014) asserts that student success is a united goal of most educational institutions. Most college mission statements at least mention student success as part of their promise to society. What varies is how each institution goes about achieving student success within their unique environment. However, despite the various objectives, goals, or initiatives each institution takes on, the success of students will depend on the level of engagement displayed by its faculty and staff (Harrill, Lawton, & Fabianke, 2015). If community college staff is not positively engaged in what they do, students will suffer the consequences.

The next positive outcome is an institutional culture that draws people in. If a community college is successful in engaging its faculty and staff, worker morale will be high, goals will be obtained, turnover will be low, and the organizational climate will encourage employee recruitment efforts (2015). The desire to be a part of such a unique culture, where employees are valued, should also help with retention. Research has shown that workers want to be part of an organizational culture that shares the same vision and goals, while embracing change (McWade, 2014).

The last positive outcome is obtaining a community of faculty and staff who have bought into the future success of the organization, are secure in their identity, and committed to being part of the educational solution in the region. Thirolf (2017) notes how high employee engagement in community colleges can give staff a sense of purpose and identity that is irreplaceable. Research has shown that employees who have confidence in their identity and purpose are more likely to pass on that success to others (2017). Therefore, the more faculty and staff engage in their roles, the high chance of overall success the community college will have towards reaching its institutional goals.

Challenges to employee engagement in community colleges. Community colleges today are in the midst of navigating rapid change, which includes: decreasing resources, growing competition, and increasingly complex diverse student populations (Kadlec & Rowlett, 2014). These turbulent times have called for rapid changes both internally and holistically to the environment in which community colleges operate (2014). While rapid changes are being implemented on a continual basis, many faculty and staff are asked to engage in their jobs while doing more with less (McWade, 2014). At the same time, it is imperative that community college leaders understand how to engage their faculty and staff to perform at a high level while

the environment is ripe with change. Harrill, Lawton, and Fabianke (2015) assert that there are several challenges those leaders will face in engaging their staff. Those challenges include: budget cuts, a growing percentage of adjunct faculty to compensate higher demand, and perceptions of top-down leadership which can imply faculty and staff expertise are not valid (2015). Additional challenges are: too many initiatives to address a plethora of success goals, silos between departments that deter communication, and the time and number of resources needed to accomplish goals (2015). Each of these unique challenges pose a threat to employee engagement because they create disunity, poor internal communication, a lack of resources, and pressure to succeed without clear vision. The problem for transformational leaders is to understand how they can inspire engagement when the environment within community colleges is full of opportunities for employees to disengage.

Rapidly Changing Environment

Changes occur within every business on a regular basis. Navigating change is often an arduous task that takes time, dedication, and creative thinking (Woods, 2014). However, when organizations experience rapid change, particularly within the business environment, it can be potentially detrimental to both the working atmosphere and the morale of the employees involved (Kushell, 2013). For example, research has shown on numerous occasions that rapid organizational change influences employee: perception of a company (Trzaska, 2014), level of trust in leadership within the organization (Mangum, 2013), commitment to the company (Harrill, Lawton, & Fabianke, 2015), and overall engagement in work (Kadlec & Rowlett, 2014). Hassett and Strain (2016) claim changes are occurring within organizations today at such a rapid pace that it is almost impossible to predict any long-term outcomes with any success. In the community college setting, a rapidly changing environment has become the new norm for many

systems across the county (Myran, 2013). The following review of rapidly changing environments will touch on rapid change within organizations, its impact on employee engagement, rapid change within community colleges, and the impact transformational leaders have in a rapidly changing environment.

Rapid Change in Organizations

Change within an organization can take many forms (Woods, 2014). It can be a simple alteration from one process to another (Mangum, 2013); the addition of new initiatives, processes, or policies (Myran, 2013); a shift in organizational leadership or structure (Cloud, 2010); or an update in financials to lead a business (Kishur, 2004). Rapid change takes place when ordinary changes become more complex, occur in much higher numbers, and are implemented within a short amount of time (Kushell, 2013). When numerous shifts, new global requirements, or large organizational adjustments are made, it can create an institutional environment that is chaotic, unorganized, and sometimes extremely difficult for employees to navigate (Woods, 2014). A rapidly changing environment is one that involves a plethora of changes to the institution, in short amount of time, and on multiple levels, that impacts how employees effectively do their jobs (McAdam & Leonard, 1998). Such environments can be extremely difficult to predict due to their fast pace, and even harder to manage (Hassett & Strain, 2016).

Impact of Rapid Change on Employee Engagement

Keeping a workforce engaged, positive, and productive can be a challenge to leaders even in times of prosperity when rapid change is not apparent (Catteuw, Flynn, & Vonderhorst, 2007). However, when the business environment becomes inundated with rapid change, engaging employees and boosting productivity is extremely difficult (2007). Kushell (2013)

claims that rapid organizational changes can lead to employee frustrations, obstacles to productivity, feelings of angst towards managers, and disengagement in job duties. Depending on what the rapid changes are, or the severity of the environment, worker morale may take such a hit that employees threaten to walk out on the job, or demand a solution.

Rapid Changes in Community Colleges

While community colleges have seen a fair share of changes since their inception, the pace of changes has accelerated in the last five years, placing more pressure on leaders to provide solutions while keeping staff productive and properly engaged (Trzaska (2014). There are many components to the rapidly changing environment within community colleges; however, the four most prominent changes are: organizational structure; funding; enrollment practices; and the many success initiatives such as retention measures, graduation/completion programs, and developing methods to better assess student learning outcomes (Mangum, 2013). The rapid changes within those four areas is vastly altering the business environment of the colleges, making it more difficult than ever for leaders to inspire employees to engage in their duties in order to obtain organizational goals (Thirolf, 2017). Research on those four components is also provided below.

Organizational structure. One of the largest components of a rapidly changing environment within community colleges today is a changing organizational structure. Most often, a change in organizational structure at a community college is due transitions within the president's office (Thompson, 2010). Rabey (2011) notes that president turnover occurs very frequently due the average age most presidents are when they assume their positions, and the proximity they are to retirement. In fact, in a survey of more than 415 retired presidents, the average age when taking on the position was 58, and the average term length was five years

(2011). In a similar survey, Jaschik and Lederman (2016) reported that half of all presidents had been in office less than five years, with only 28% being in office over ten years. What makes this data so important is the fact that newly appointed community college presidents almost always reengineer their senior leadership and the entire organizational structure shortly after taking on the position (Coons, 2012). Incoming presidents are also likely to create a fresh vision, introduce new organizational goals, and start different initiatives upon taking office (MacAulay, Yue, & Thurlow, 2010). Those sorts of changes impact everyone within the college and can alter the commitment and engagement levels of all employees regardless of position or tenure (Thompson, 2010). Dickerson (2000) noted that many employees resist or disengage when changes are brought upon them, especially if those changes are not properly communicated. Other research shows that employee reaction to change is not nearly as bad if the newly appointed president effectively communicates change by creating open dialog (Thompson, 2010).

While the current issue of organizational change, due to president turnover, is substantial, it does not appear to be a problem that is going away any time soon. Coons (2012) notes that a shortage of qualified replacements for vacant president positions often means other senior administrators in the community college setting will fill the positions. Shults (2001) adds that key community college administrators, such as SSDOs and CAOs are traditionally next in line for president positions. However, research has shown that many of those positions are also nearing retirement age (Shults, 2001), which further adds to the complex constant changes in organizational leadership that many institutions face. It therefore is safe to predict every community college can expect rapid changes in their organizational structure, vision, goals, and leadership about every five to seven years on average unless this trend ceases to continue.

Funding. The second area that contributes to a rapidly changing environment in community colleges is funding. Traditionally, community colleges have been primarily funded through their state and the federal government, with a smaller percentage coming from a local government (Kishur, 2014). While several funding models exist, many are based on enrollment, while some states have opted to focus more attention on student completion or other metrics (Myran, 2013). In the 1960s and 1970s, community colleges saw funding abound from both state and federal sources as their popularity and enrollment boomed (Pulley, 2014). However, as more politicians became enamored with public funding requests from other entities, they began requesting demonstrated return on investment. Even in years where student enrollment continued to skyrocket, such as during the great recession in the latter 2000s, community college funding became increasingly devalued (Tschechtelin, 2011). When the colleges needed funding and resources the most (to train the skilled workers needed for a shrunken economy) they also faced intense and growing demand to increase student access, retention, outcomes, and completion rates (Phelan, 2014). With the constant pressure to create initiatives to better their outcomes, community college employees needed an increase in funding and resources to achieve goals. However, because enrollment continued to dictate the ability of community colleges to answer the challenge to increase rates of student success, a decrease in students after the recession worsened their condition (Tschechtelin, 2011).

While the US economy is bouncing back from recession of the late 2000s, state appropriations are still being rapidly reduced at the same time nationwide support for higher education institutions is declining as well (Pope, 2013). Within the past five years, a reduction in student enrollment due to a better economy, budget cuts from both the state and federal governments, rising tuition costs, and overall support for funding is rapidly changing the

environment of higher education (2013). MacAulay, Yue, and Thurlow (2010) assert that senior administrators at community colleges need to work diligently with legislative bodies to change their support for funding. Until that occurs, employees within the colleges will continue to face the challenge of doing more with less. With a lack of financial support, along with the constant change to the work environment, employees will need to fully engage in their duties to have a chance at success (Trzaska, 2014). While many employees are capable of stepping up to that challenge, the question becomes what level of inspiration it will take from senior leaders to engage those employees despite the changing environment.

Enrollment practices. Another area of rapid change in the community college is student enrollment and the practices many institutions are taking to address the fluctuating needs of the community. Throughout the history of the community college, student enrollment has seen both massive increases and sharp declines (Cloud, 2010). Unlike four-year colleges or universities, community colleges maintain an open door policy, which means they typically cannot dictate who their students are, where they come from, or the needs of those they attract (Tschechtelin, 2011). Because many community colleges train workers for the local economy, their enrollment is often controlled by the employment opportunities immediately surrounding the institution (Kishur, 2004). This often presents a problem since student enrollment and the local economy seem to be inversely related. Tschechtelin (2011) claims that “enrollment growth in community colleges is often inversely related to the strength of the economy as men and women turn to college to prepare for new or upgraded careers” (p. 50). Therefore, when the economy is doing well, meaning there is an abundance of jobs, community colleges typically see a decline in enrollment as those individuals are employed. However, when the economy hits a downturn,

such as the recession in the latter part of the 2000s, unemployment is high and community college student enrollment drastically increases as people seek training for new careers (2011).

Over the past five years, many community colleges needed to adjust their practices to handle declining enrollment as the country returns from the great recession seen in the 2000s (Pope, 2013). While this would lead many to consider opening the door as wide as possible to fill the void, community colleges are also being pressed to drastically improve their student completion by federal agencies such as the U.S. Department of Education (Hicks, West, Amos, & Maheshwari, 2014). A focus on student graduation and completion is part of a nationwide push to increase the rate at which students who enroll in college finish with a credential (2014). In order to address the completion mandate, many institutions are making rapid changes to their admission practices, such as removing late registration (O'Banion, 2012). Calls for the removal of late registration (which is the practice of allowing students to register for classes at the last minute) have existed for many years (McMillan, Parke, & Lanning, 1997). The main reason for its fall from popularity has been due to research that overwhelmingly reflected it produced poor academic outcomes (Tompkins & Williams, 2015). O'Banion (2012) notes that 35 percent of new students who were allowed to register late ended up progressing to the next semester. Removing late registration has caused community colleges to rapidly change their practices, while attempting to meet the needs of local employers at the same time.

Another area of enrollment that has changed drastically in the past few years is the practices dealing with foreign students. Nienhusser (2014) notes, "several factors have affected undocumented students' postsecondary education enrollment: limited availability of outreach efforts, high out-of-state tuition rates, complex residency requirements, little or no financial aid options, and fears associated with immigration status" (p. 5). In addition to these challenges, the

time and effort it takes to enroll foreign students is taxing on admissions staff in community colleges. While the world of academia pushes institutions of higher learning to remove barriers for foreign student enrollment, both state and local residency policies often compete to make such implementations more difficult (2014). Much like the battle for funding, employees are left stuck in the middle of enforcing policy while meeting performance outcomes.

Success initiatives. The last component of a rapidly changing environment in community colleges today involves the many initiatives being thrust upon leaders in creating student success. Some examples of these include initiatives to improve graduation and completion (Hicks, West, Amos, & Maheshwari, 2014; Woods, 2014); student access and retention (Tschechtelin, 2011); academic learning outcomes (O'Banion, 2012); and career readiness (Parker, 2010). On the surface, many of these initiatives are good for students who will enter a community college with plenty of focus on their overall success. However, the sheer number of initiatives being created within the last five years has caused rapid changes in the community college environment, which has put a heavy burden on employee engagement and performance outcomes (Thirolf, 2017).

Smith, Baldwin, and Schmidt (2015) claim that so many success initiatives have birthed the unintended consequence of slow progress within the colleges, as leaders try to meet the varying requirements thrust upon them. The vast array of initiatives meant for good has caused an enormous amount of confusion and fatigue among community college employees (2015). Initiative fatigue has become one of the greatest challenges to employee engagement for community college leaders (Harrill, Lawton, & Fabianke, 2015). Yet another problem with so many initiatives that are meant to improve student success is the ability to understand which one is actually working (Smith et al., 2015). If student success is being achieved, but no one is able

to measure exactly what has caused it, then there are potentially efforts being done in vain. Producing initiatives and throwing resources at a problem is not an efficient way of improving performance or increasing employee engagement (Harrill, Lawton, & Fabianke, 2015).

Rapid Changes in the North Carolina Community College System

The four components of rapid change found in community colleges around the country are also prominent in the 58 community colleges in North Carolina. Kalleberg and Dunn (2015) report that the NCCCS has experienced rapid changes in enrollment, funding, organizational change, and success initiatives, all within the past five years. For example, compared to the rest of the US, North Carolina has been a leader in community college reliance and enrollment since 2010 (Clotfelter, Ladd, Muschkin, & Vigdor, 2013). While the national average of college students attending a 2-year institution was approximately 34% in 2010, North Carolina students accounted for 43% of all postsecondary enrollments (2013). The rapid rate at which North Carolina community colleges have experienced growth has meant the need for increased support and funding to manage the new students. However, at the same time colleges have experienced growth, both state and federal support has waned (Kalleberg & Dunn, 2015). Therefore, many of the colleges within the NCCCS have found themselves working with increasingly tight budgets, while trying to manage more with less. This has prompted employees to increase the amount of work they are required to do, with decreasing support and resources with which to operate. Kushell (2013) notes that rapid changes that decrease support while increasing work are a recipe for employee disengagement.

Another rapid change unique to the NCCCS is the multitude of specific success initiatives found in the state. Two of those initiatives that have fundamentally changed the system include multiple measures placement, and the redesign of developmental studies (Brown

& Spies, 2015). Multiple measures is an initiative to place incoming students in college-level courses based on their unweighted high school grade point average (GPA). Students who possess a high school GPA of at least 2.6, coupled with successful completion of the four approved math courses with a C grade or higher, can enter into gateway college courses without taking a placement test (State Board of Community Colleges, 2016). While this initiative is better for students, it has increased the work load on admissions staff, who spend more time reviewing high school transcripts and entering course credit (Brown & Spies, 2015). In approximately 2013, the NCCCS also engaged in a complete redesign of its developmental math, reading, and English classes (Brown & Spies, 2015). This redesign included modularizing the developmental courses into 4 and 8-week sections, thereby allowing students to take multiple courses within the same semester. In order to make this possible, faculty were required to assist in repackaging the content into the modules in order to meet a new set of outcomes. Additionally, staff developed new processes and procedures to change student registration schedules for those who were not successful during the first four to eight week sections (2015). While the changes have brought about many positive student outcomes, their system-wide implementation has been taxing to faculty and staff working to ensure success.

Another success initiative in the NCCCS was the redevelopment of the state-wide placement test offered to incoming students called the North Carolina Diagnostic Assessment and Placement (NC DAP) test. In response to many complaints over the reliability and validity of the old placement tests many of the colleges were using, the NCCCS worked to create a new diagnostic assessment, which would better align with the recently redesigned developmental courses (NCCCS, 2014). Upon its implementation, the redesigned placement test required a plethora of resources that weren't previously needed. Resources included an increase in staff

and faculty development to use the assessment, an increase in campus technology (many colleges needed to purchase additional computers and equipment), and better communication with students since the new test was longer and required scheduling in advance (Brown & Spies, 2015).

The Impact Transformational Leaders Have During Rapidly Changing Environments

Rapidly changing environments are created when organizations are exposed to a plethora of changes within a short amount of time (Waldman, 2010). As already stated, such environments can wreak havoc on employee engagement if the right leadership approaches are not taken. Research has shown that employees who are in the midst of organizational changes are less likely to be motivated to work and tend to perform at a much lower level (Bommer, Rich, & Rubin, 2005). Bottomley, Burgess, and Fox III (2014) claims that an effective leader inspires change, organizes activities, and evaluates employee success. Through the inspirational motivation dimension of transformational leadership, leaders are able to help employees successfully reframe their current situation and embrace change (Campbell, Syed, & Morris, 2010). While going through rapid changes, transformational leaders take responsibility for change while motivating employees toward self-actualization (Bommer, Rich, & Rubin, 2005). Transformational leaders inspire traits such as loyalty from followers, while encouraging them to express their ideas and opinions (Ho, 2016). Eddy (2013) asserts that in the context of a rapidly changing environment, the transformational leader must inspire employees through collaboration, mentoring, coaching, and servant-leading, in order to ensure engagement. However, these concepts are extremely difficult to manage given the changing of the guard that typically occurs in community college transitions (2013). Transformational leaders who communicate a vision to employees are concerned about the quality their organization provides,

and inspire other members to do the same (Basham, 2012). Such leaders will also establish an environment of excellence and increasing performance that is not an act but a habit (Basham, 2012).

Transition and Summary

In this section, the researcher informed the reader of the background, problem, and purpose of the study, which included understanding how transformational leaders within the NCCCS inspire employee engagement in the midst of a rapidly changing environment. The conceptual framework laid out how the inspirational motivation component of transformational leadership was used to better understand how leaders do their inspiring. The significance of the study described how this problem relates to business, leadership, and a Biblical integration. The researcher studied the literature related to community colleges, transactional leadership, transformational leadership, employee engagement, and rapidly changing environments. After initially looking at the seminal works of each, the researcher placed special emphasis on how they relate to one another, particularly in the community college setting. The information in the literature review reflected the need for addressing the research problem.

This particular study was specifically designed to fill a gap in the present academic literature as it relates to community colleges in North Carolina. The study focused on the ability of transformational leaders to inspire employees to engage in their work. More specifically, the researcher sought to determine how the dimension of inspirational motivation was used in the inspiration process with the understanding that community colleges in North Carolina are currently experiencing a rapidly changing environment. The results of the study will assist senior transformational leaders in community colleges with understanding how they can inspire

employee engagement in their own institutions while immersed in a rapidly changing environment.

The applied doctoral research project is discussed in the next section. The researcher provided information concerning the role of the researcher, participants, research method and design, data collection, and data analysis techniques. This work was completed to address the research questions posed as part of the applied doctoral research project.

Section 2: The Project

Understanding how transformational leaders inspire employee engagement is a critical business problem for organizations of all types. In this study, the researcher sought to focus on how transformational leaders inspire employee engagement within the rapidly changing environment found in community colleges in North Carolina. There are several known obstacles that help create the rapid changes found in the NCCCS (Smith, Baldwin, & Schmidt, 2015). Previous research has shown the negative impacts a rapidly changing environment can have on employee engagement (Kushell, 2013). Community college leaders need employees to engage in their work in order to obtain optimum performance levels, and to recruit, retain, and graduate tomorrow's workforce (Woods, 2014). While prior academic literature provides research on the impact of rapid change on employee engagement, and the difference transformational leaders practicing inspirational motivation can have on employees, there is a gap in the knowledge of how those leaders inspire engagement for employees going through rapid change; particularly in the NCCCS.

In this section, information is provided on the items needed to conduct the research project. The researcher compiled the information to address the questions posed. This study was conducted to act as a guide for senior leaders in the community college setting to understand the specific ways transformational leaders inspire engagement through rapid change. Items include: purpose statement, role of the researcher, participants, research method and design, population sampling, data collection, data analysis technique, and reliability and validity.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this narrative qualitative study was to gain an understanding of how transformational leaders within the NCCCS inspire employees to engage in their jobs while

experiencing rapid changes. Employee engagement is defined as the physical, cognitive, and emotional involvement individuals have in performing their assigned roles (Kahn & Heaphy, 2013). By definition, a transformational leader is a person who has the ability to motivate and inspire others to reach new heights, while developing deep admiration, loyalty, and respect from employees (Yukl, 2010). For the purpose of this study, transformational leaders were identified as community college presidents, chief academic officers, or senior student development administrators, who possess a transformational leadership style. The behaviors of transformational leaders has been positively tied to employee engagement through various means such as the creation of a favorable work environment (Li, 2016); however, there is little research reflecting how leaders inspire engagement in the midst of rapid change. A rapidly changing environment is one that gets increasingly complex due to numerous challenges that are placed upon an organization within a short amount of time (Kushell, 2013). In this study, the rapidly changing environment of the NCCCS is one that has become overly complex within the past five years due to the numerous challenges being presented at the same time. Such challenges include: multiple initiatives to implement in response to new federal and state legislation, lack of funding for appropriate staff, inadequate resources for training and professional development, and deteriorating work environments. The transformational leaders who were interviewed offered guidance that will assist new presidents, chief academic officers, and student development administrators, who are faced with facilitating employee engagement while experiencing rapid changes.

Role of the Researcher

In a general sense, the role of the researcher in a qualitative study is to collect data through a personal means in order to understand a phenomenon, story, or set of views (Stake,

2010). In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument: observing, interviewing, or playing a subjective role in the study, while using personal experience to make an interpretation (2010). In this particular qualitative study, the researcher's main focus was on the inspiration of transformational leaders. Therefore, it was important to ensure that the only respondents studied were those that possessed a transformational leadership style. This was conducted through the use of the multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ), which has been proven to be one of the most reliable instruments available to determine the leadership style of an individual (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

After analyzing the survey results, the researcher placed participants in two groups: those whose score suggested they were transformational in leadership style, and those whose score suggested otherwise. Next, the researcher's role was to set up personal interviews with a random selection of individuals in the transformational group. Interview questions were developed that sought to answer the overarching research questions and to address the gap in knowledge previously discussed. Interviews were then conducted, which focused on understanding how the leaders inspired engagement among employees within their community college. The researcher then used the data collected through the interview process to develop themes of responses, which are further discussed in section three.

Participants

Participants of the study were senior administrative leaders from community colleges within the State of North Carolina. Those leaders included the community college president, CAO, and SSDO, as those positions most appropriately impact employee engagement within institutions. While there are other senior administrative positions, such as chief financial officers (CFO), or chief information officers (CIO), they were excluded from this study due to the

inconsistent job descriptions of the positions from around the State. The three positions chosen represent leaders who directly supervise a majority of the faculty and staff at the community college level.

The researcher started the data collection process by first seeking to qualify the participants to ensure only transformational leaders were studied. To do this, it was necessary to obtain the contact information for each of the participants. The researcher collected the email addresses and phone numbers available to represent each of the 58 community college presidents, COAs, and SSDO's through the publicly available directory pages of each college website. Due to the vacancy of some positions, and the limited staffing of smaller institutions, not all colleges had a representative for each position. Out of the 58 colleges in the system, 153 contacts were collected. Of those, the researcher randomly narrowed the list down to 51, which strategically included 17 of each leadership position being studied. The 51 participants selected represented a third of the total population.

The researcher chose the MLQ-5X survey, offered through Mind Garden, Inc., to determine the leadership style of each participant in order to qualify the group for further research. All 51 selected participants were emailed an invitation letter (see Appendix A). The invitation also included a consent form (see Appendix B), with a provided link to the survey, among other information pertaining to the study. The participants were asked to provide their name, position, and college on the survey so they could be further contacted by the researcher if the scores indicated they possessed a transformational leadership style. The consent form indicated that none of the data collected would be shared with any other parties or made public by the researcher, and would only be used to assist the researcher in determining which participants to further study. The survey results were only seen and interpreted by the

researcher. The results were kept in an excel document and saved on the hard drive of the researcher's personal lap top, which is password protected.

After the survey data was collected, the researcher filtered the 11 responding participants down to include only the nine individuals whose scores reflected the transformational leadership style. Next, the research divided the filtered list into three groups, each representing one of the leadership positions being studied (president, CAO, SSDO). After the groups were identified, the researcher randomly selected two transformational leaders from each group to equal six total participants. Six total leaders were chosen for this study because narrative research typically involves as few as two to six participants due to the story telling nature of the interview (Creswell, 2013). The six participants selected were then contacted again through an emailed invitation (see Appendix C), to take part in one-on-one interviews over the phone or face-to-face. The basis of the interviews was to gain the narrative, personal lived experiences of the participants in relation to the research questions. While conducting the interviews the researcher recorded the responses and later transcribed the data into written form to allow the participants to check their answers. Both the recordings and the transcriptions were kept confidential by the researcher, and only used to complete the research study. The identities of the participants, or their respective colleges, were never revealed in the study, or to anyone other than the researcher. The information gathered from the interviews was used to help other administrators understand best practices as it related to employee engagement in the rapidly changing environment of the NCCCS. Interviews were scheduled after the initial six based on random selection until data saturation was met. The researcher did not collect any personal, confidential, or private information for this study.

Research Method and Design

In this qualitative study, the researcher sought to understand how transformational leaders inspire employee engagement in the NCCCS. The main focal point is centered on the inspirational motivation component of transformational leaders, and understanding how such individuals inspire engagement during a rapidly changing environment. This section includes a discussion on why a qualitative method of research was chosen for this study instead of a quantitative or mixed method. More specifically, information has been provided which explains why a narrative inquiry research design was selected over many other design options.

Method

Qualitative research methods are suitable for studies that seek to understand the experiences, perceptions, or views of a targeted population (Stake, 2010). Like quantitative research, qualitative studies can address the causation of events or issues through both observation and interpretation (Black, 1994). Unlike quantitative research, qualitative studies focus understanding, rather than measuring. Alternatively, quantitative research methods are best used when an investigator identifies a research problem and needs to explain why something occurs (Creswell, 2012). Creswell (2012) claims that a quantitative approach should be used when a research problem needs to be explained, and a qualitative approach should be used for problems that need to be explored. More specifically, quantitative approaches focus on comparing two or more variables through analysis to determine how they relate to one another (Barnham, 2015).

A qualitative method was selected for this study because the researcher sought to understand how transformational leaders were inspiring their employees to engage while undergoing rapid change. Due to a gap in the literature, such a study was not readily available.

More specifically, there is a void in literature that provides details on how transformational leaders in community colleges are going about inspiring employees to engage despite an environment of rapid change. The use of qualitative research methodologies help gain an understanding of the perspectives of certain groups of people, which can be valuable towards understanding if change is needed (Knudsen et al., 2012). Qualitative studies that involve interviews with individuals, such as transformational leaders or their employees, can assist researches towards gaining important information that cannot be easily interpreted by quantitative data (Black, 1994). A quantitative method would have assisted the researcher if the goal was to measure any correlation between levels of inspiration and employee engagement, or the impact rapid change has on employee engagement. However, existing research and literature has already been conducted to measure such correlations with positive results (Li, 2016). Other quantitative studies have measured the characteristics of transformational leaders (Mangum, 2013), and their behaviors (Bottomley, Burgess, & Fox III, 2014), rendering the need for further quantitative research in that area inappropriate. A mixed method was not appropriate for this study due to its required time frame, and the existing quantitative literature already conducted.

Research Design

The researcher used a narrative design for this qualitative study which focuses on understanding the lived stories or experiences transformational leaders in the NCCCS had when they inspired their employees to engage. Contrasts between qualitative and quantitative research can easily be determined based on the type of research being conducted, the research design is more specific to what the researcher will focus on, and how they will gain the desired data. Creswell (2013) notes that there are five qualitative approaches to inquiry a researcher can

utilize, which vary based on the researcher's particular data analysis strategy, collection form, focus, and structure. Those approaches are: narrative inquiry, phenomenological, grounded theory, ethnographic, and case study (2013). In the following paragraphs, the researcher described each research design, while explaining why narrative inquiry was specifically chosen for this particular study and the others were not.

The first design discussed is narrative inquiry. Clandinin (2016) asserts that "Narrative inquiry is an approach to the study of human lives conceived as a way of honoring lived experience as a source of important knowledge and understanding" (p. 17). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) further explain that narrative inquiry assists researchers with understanding the lived experiences that make up people's lives, through the use of interviews, observation, and visuals. Creswell (2013) describes a narrative study as a design used when a researcher collects stories and experiences from a target audience through personal interviews for the purpose of conducting a thematic analysis. Riessman (2008) adds that studies conducted with a narrative inquiry design specifically focus on events, practices, or decisions perceived by a speaker that are used for meaningful evaluation. Through thematic analysis, the researcher excavates the concrete practices of the participant through the lived experiences they share (2008).

Clandinin (2016) claims that there are four key terms associated with narrative inquiry, which are: living, telling, retelling, and reliving. There are also three types of approaches used to analyze narrative stories which include: thematic analysis, structural analysis, and dialogic/performance analysis (Riessman, 2008). A thematic analysis is used when the researcher creates themes from the data "told" by a participant; a structural analysis occurs when the researcher switches to a "telling" format where the data is described in conversation form, and a dialogic/performance analysis is used when the focus turns to how the story was produced

or performed (2008). For this study, the researcher used a narrative inquiry design because the focal point was to understand what lived stories or experiences transformational leaders in the NCCCS had when they inspired employees to engage. In this particular case, the researcher conducted interviews with randomly selected presidents, CAOs, and SSDOs who identify as a transformational leader. Next, the researcher used the thematic analysis approach to narrative inquiry to convey the data discovered. The responses to the interview questions were analyzed to create themes, which were used to tell the story of how employee engagement was achieved for future leaders to use as a guide.

Phenomenological research is similar to narrative research in several ways (Creswell, 2012). For example, both study the lived experiences of a target audience and develop themes from the data collected. However, the major difference is how and why the themes are created. In phenomenological studies, the focus is on describing and understanding what phenomenon is taking place, and how it impacts the lived experiences of a person (Creswell, 2013). Connelly (2010) notes that the key to a phenomenological study is discovering the lived experiences of individuals who have participated in a phenomenon, such as overcoming a sudden disability or ailment. While the process of interviewing participants and creating themes is very similar to the narrative research design chosen for this study, a phenomenological method was not suitable for this study because of the absence of a phenomenon.

A grounded theory form of research is conducted in order to discover a theory or unified theoretical explanation that describes a process (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). The use of grounded theory is to setup a framework or set of boundaries that support a series of processes that will occur over time based on the data collected (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Throughout the process of gathering data, a researcher may interview participate several times in order to fill

in gaps until the theory is fully developed (Creswell, 2013). This form of methodology was not chosen in this instance because the goal was not to develop one overarching theory on how engagement occurs. Instead, the researcher sought to develop themes of lived examples which would give future leaders several ways to approach engaging their own employees instead of just one theoretical approach.

Ethnography is a methodology that involves studying and observing an entire cultural or social group to understand behaviors, patterns, customs, or ways of life from their perspective (Ross, Rogers, & Duff, 2016). In many instances, the researcher will be immersed into the lives and culture of the group being studied for a better understanding. Ethnography research is conducted when the goal is to understand a large, sometimes complex, issue such as rules for behavior (Creswell, 2012). This type of methodology was not chosen because its outcomes do not fit the intended purpose of the researcher conducting this study. While the transformational leaders being studied are a part of a culture-sharing group in the NC Community College System, their behaviors and relationships are not the topic of conversation.

A case study design is done within a bounded context over a specific time period (Yin, 2009). Case studies focus on an actual case that is currently happening in real-time and seeks to present an in-depth understanding through multiple data collecting approaches such as: observations, interviews, reports, or documents (Creswell, 2013). They can be very simplistic (Stake, 2010), or complex (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Often, case studies span over a longer time frame so that the researcher can gain as much information as possible before presenting the results. A case study methodology was not chosen by the researcher because understanding the process of inspiration and employee engagement is not a specific case, and does not occur over a set time span.

Population and Sampling

The population chosen for this study included community college presidents, CAOs, and SSDOs, within the NCCCS. These positions were chosen because of their direct responsibility in managing and influencing the employees (faculty and staff) at a community college. If employee engagement is taking place at an institution, it is most likely through one of these positions strictly due to their leadership and decision-making at the institution (Vaughan & Weisman, 2003). For example, in the community college setting one of the president's many tasks is to motivate employees to fulfill the college's mission (Mangum, 2013). As the head of an institution, they often play a lead role in the organizational direction and can either help or hurt the workplace environment with decisions and actions. The CAO is the administrative head of all academic programs, including all instructional employees, faculty, and staff (Anderson, Murray, & Olivarez, 2002). The SSDO is the administrative head of the student affairs division of a community college (Tull, 2014). The SSDO directly manages all functions and employees inside what is considered the student development office.

Once the individuals for the population to be used were determined, the next step was to qualify the individuals to ensure they possessed the transformational leadership style necessary to validate the study. Before qualification could occur, the researcher needed to select a method of sampling to strategically reduce the population into a smaller representation. After reviewing the contact lists on each college's website, the researcher discovered many smaller colleges combine the position of CAO and SSDO into one position. At the time this study was being conducted, there were a handful of vacancies within these three positions in the NCCCS. Therefore, only 153 contacts were discovered in the entire population. In order to break down the contacts into a smaller sample, the researcher used a process of random purposeful sampling

to reduce the total population by one-third. The concept of purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research, meaning the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2013). Random purposeful sampling involves focusing on specific contexts within a population and then randomly selecting participants who meet those criteria (Creswell, 2014). In this study, the researcher divided the total population of 153 contacts into three groups representing each of the three positions being studied (presidents, CAOs, and SSDOs). Next, the researcher randomly selected 17 individuals from each of the three groups, meaning there would be 17 presidents, CAOs, and SSDOs chosen to go through the qualification process. Using this method also strategically reduced the total population of 153, down to 51 (one-third), while further subdividing the group into a more purposeful and well-rounded representation of the whole.

Next, the 51 individuals chosen were sent the MLQ-5X leadership questionnaire to determine their leadership style. After the results were collected, the researcher identified and selected only those individuals that both participated and had scores suggesting they possessed a transformational leadership style. Any non-transformational participants were purposefully removed at this point since their leadership style was not the focus of this study. Next, the researcher split the remaining transformational leaders into three groups representing all three leadership positions (president, CAO, SSDO). Once the groups were determined, the researcher again used random purposeful sampling to select two participants from each group to contact for the purpose of conducting interviews. Huber and Whelan (1999) note that narrative research can have as little as one or two individuals, unless a larger group of participants can help develop the overall story. The researcher attempted to study two individuals from all three desired positions

(presidents, CAOs, and SSDOs) who were qualified as having a transformational leadership style. Creswell (2013) claims the goal is to collect extensive details about each individual in order to elucidate the specific narrative. By gaining an understanding of how all three leadership positions inspire employee engagement, the researcher sought to provide insight for future leaders within the NCCCS.

Data Collection

Stake (2010) claims that data collection in a qualitative study involves personal happenings in time in a place. It can include all kinds of data such as: numerical measurements, photographs, observation, texting, and interviews. Creswell (2013) notes that data collection in a qualitative study involves gaining permissions, conducting a good sampling strategy, developing a means to record information, storing the data, and anticipating ethical issues that may arise. In the following paragraphs, the researcher will present the instruments used in this study, information on how data was collected, and techniques used to organize data for further use. The researcher will also discuss how the qualitative narrative method chosen for this project dictated the means of data collection, and how the information will be later used in the next section.

Instruments

When conducting a research study, there are many types of instruments available to a researcher. The use of a particular instrument is dependent upon the type of study being conducted, the research design, need for the data, and outcomes desired (Colton & Covert, 2007). While quantitative research focuses on numeric or statistical data, which is often obtained through survey instruments and questionnaires (2007), qualitative research focuses on empirical or experiential data, which is obtained through observation, interviews, examining records, or writing reports (Stake, 2010). For this study, the researcher utilized a qualitative method, which

required the use of personal interviews of transformational leaders. However, to maintain a high level of reliability and validity of the data collected, it was necessary to first qualify the participants so that only leaders who possessed the transformational style were interviewed.

Qualifying the study participants. To ensure the data being collected for this study was as accurate and reliable as possible, the researcher decided to administer a qualification assessment to the 51 randomly selected participants to determine their leadership style. To do this, the researcher obtained permission to use the multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ) by Mind Garden, Inc. (see Appendix D and Appendix E). This 45-question survey, developed by Avolio and Bass (2004), asks leaders to rate how often they engage in a particular activity listed on a scale of zero to four, with zero being “not at all”, and four being “frequently, if not always”. The goal in giving this survey was to inform the researcher which individuals in the sample were considered transformational leaders based on their score. Determining the leadership style of the participants was imperative to the researcher so only those leaders who possess the transformational leadership style could be further studied. The concepts measured by the MLQ survey include four components of transformational leadership, two components of transactional leadership, two components of passive avoidant leadership, and three outcomes of leadership (Avolio & Bass, 2004). The transformational components included: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. Components of transactional leadership included contingent reward and management by exception (active). Components of passive avoidant leadership included management by exception (passive) and laissez-faire leadership. Questions concerning leadership outcomes covered extra effort, leader effectiveness, and satisfaction. Scores on the MLQ survey are determined by adding the overall rating (0 to 4) for all questions specifically addressing one of

the leadership components, then dividing by the total number of questions for that component. Mind Garden, Inc. provides researchers with a manual, which gives an answer key, and table with national norms listed for each leadership component. To be considered a transformational leader, a participant needs to score higher than the national norm on the assessment.

The MLQ survey is considered one of the best instruments available to determine the leadership style of an individual. Its 45-question format is highly reliable, and has proven to be valid in helping both leaders and followers understand leadership styles (Avolio & Bass, 2004). While the assessment is typically taken anonymously, Mind Garden, Inc. provides researchers with the option to copy the 45 questions from the assessment, and upload into Survey Monkey (see permission to reproduce in Appendix E, and sample questions in Appendix F). The researcher utilized that option for this study because it was necessary to know the identities of the participants in order to contact the random selection of transformational leaders for follow-up interviews. By loading the questions into Survey Monkey, the researcher was able modify the survey to add additional questions pertaining to the participants contact information. Additional questions included: name, community college of employment, job title, email address, and phone number. Because this method was chosen, the researcher had to score the assessment personally and analyze the data to determine which participants were considered transformational. All data was stored on the researcher's personal lap top, which was password protected. Since the data was only used to qualify the research sample for further study, the identities of the participants were not shared with any outside sources, and the results were not reported in this document. After the survey concluded, the researcher randomly selected two presidents, two CAOs, and two SSDOs whose scores reflected the transformational leadership style, in order to contact for the interview stage.

Qualitative interviews. Creswell (2013) notes that narrative research typically involves as few as one to two participants, with the possibility of more depending on the depth required to tell the story. Riessman (2008) claims that most narrative projects are based on personal interviews, with a goal of generating detailed accounts rather than brief answers or general statements. For this study, the researcher randomly selected two presidents, two CAOs, and two SSDOs from the pool of participants who qualified as transformational leaders based on their score on the MLQ assessment. Those six individuals were then contacted to participate in a follow up interview to complete the qualitative data collection process (see Appendix C). Clandinin (2016) asserts that interviews between the researcher and the participant are the most common method found in collecting data for a narrative inquiry qualitative study. The researcher asked interview questions (see Appendix G) to the participants that directly related to the study and sought to address the general research questions posed.

Data Collection Technique

As previously stated, data was collected in this study through the use of one-on-one interviews. The researcher created 17 research questions (see Appendix G), which were designed with an open-ended format to allow participants to tell their lived experiences with inspiring employee engagement. Six total individuals were interviewed. Of those, two were community college presidents, two were CAOs, and two were SSDOs. The researcher assigned the participants with a letter and number to correspond to their position. For example, the first president interviewed was assigned P1, and the second president interviewed as assigned P2. CAOs were assigned C1 and C2. SSDOs were assigned S1 and S2. This practice helped keep the responses of the participants confidential, while also maintaining a separation of job title. In order to validate each interviewee properly qualified for the study, the researcher conducted a

leadership survey prior to the selections. The interviews were recorded so that the researcher could transcribe the responses and provide the participants with an opportunity to edit their remarks as a form of member-checking. The researcher also used field notes while conducting the interviews, which aided in the decision on whether follow-up questions were needed.

Data Organization Techniques

During the interview process, it is important for a researcher to take careful notes, and to keep an accurate record of all information gathered (Stake, 2010). While interviewing participants, the researcher of this study kept track of the data collected in two ways. First, the researcher took careful field notes using a journal. Stake (2010) notes the importance of keeping a journal, which is where a researcher should keep notes about everything pertaining to the research project). Journaling during the interviews allowed the researcher to jot down thoughts, important pieces of information, additional questions, and feedback for the participants. Second, the researcher recorded the interview sessions by use of an audio tape device. By recording the sessions, the researcher was able to transcribe the interviews, and provide the participants with a written copy of their responses for possible edits as a form of member-checking. The transcriptions were completed using Microsoft Word. All data, including the audio files, journal entries, and interview transcriptions, were saved in a Google Drive folder on the researcher's personal laptop. The researcher's Google Drive account is password protected, and accessed on the mentioned laptop, which is also password protected.

Stake (2010) notes that once research data is collected, it should be coded or classified and sorted based on topics, themes, or issues important to the study. Creswell (2013) adds that the process of coding includes aggregating the information into categories using an analysis database, while labeling the data with codes for sorting purposes. For this study, the researcher

utilized a qualitative data analysis software package called Dedoose. The software allowed for the data from the open-ended interview questions to be uploaded and coded based on relevant themes relating to the research questions. The data, and the analysis program, were stored on the hard drive of the researchers lap-top, which is password protected.

Data Analysis Technique

Data collected from the interviews in this study were analyzed by the researcher and used to address all research questions and provide an understanding of how transformational leaders inspired engagement at their institutions. The data mentioned was recorded via an audio recording device, then transcribed using Microsoft Word and saved into the researcher's Google Drive account. Each transcript was placed in its own secured folder, which was then electronically shared with the corresponding participant for review and editing. Once the transcriptions were reviewed by the participants, and all corrections made, the researcher utilized the qualitative data analysis software Dedoose to analyze the data collected. The software package is built to allow data to be uploaded and coded for sorting. For this study, the researcher used the software to help inspect the transcribed interview responses from the research participants. Using the coding features within the software, the researcher was able to identify themes of relevant information that is reflected in the next section. Overall, the data analysis interpreted through this study is consistent with the research questions, conceptual framework, and findings of the study.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are critical parts of any research study, as they give it credibility (Stake, 2010). Reliability often refers to the stability of responses to multiple coders of data sets (Creswell, 2013). Validity, a form of triangulation, is when researchers make use of multiple

and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence (Creswell, 2013). While reliability and validity focus more on quantitative research, trustworthiness is more prevalent in qualitative study. In the following sections, the researcher discussed the reliability, validity, and trustworthiness of this study.

Reliability

Creswell (2013) claims that reliability in qualitative research is obtained through use of field notes, taping interviews, and consistent sampling of participants. In this study, the researcher collected data through two methods: a qualifying survey followed by one-on-one interviews. In the qualifying interview, reliability was achieved through the use of an established and heavily proven instrument called the multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ) by Mind Garden, Inc. The instrument was created by Bass (1985) and has been the leading instrument to validate leadership style for many years (Avolio & Bass, 2004). After the qualifying survey determined the next study group, reliability was based on the individual responses provided by each participant to interview questions. The sample of participants was selected randomly, based on their initial qualification. Each open-ended interview question was read verbatim to the participants to avoid a variance in responses. All interviews were recorded, and after each interview was completed the researcher transcribed the identical recorded response, and then provided to the participant in written form for evaluation. The participants had an opportunity to review their responses and make edits or corrections if needed before the responses were used.

Another way to increase reliability in a qualitative study, is to ensure “the research questions are clear, the researcher’s role and status have been explicitly described, the findings show parallelism across data sources, data was collected across the full range of appropriate settings, times, and respondents; and multiple observers’ accounts converge” (Creswell, 2014, p.

312). In this study, the researcher clearly defined the role and status to participants through a consent form (see Appendix B). The research questions (see Appendix G) were constructed in an open-ended format, which allowed for narrative responses and designed to gain experiential data from the participants. All participants were asked the same questions, and allowed the opportunity to respond accordingly.

Validity

Creswell (2013) notes that validity is split into two types, internal and external. In this study, the researcher ensured internal validity throughout the research by using several techniques. First, the researcher allowed interview participants to validate their responses by providing them with a written transcript. Creswell (2013) adds that this is a form of member-checking, where the researcher allows the participants the ability to review the findings and make corrections. Stake (2010) further notes that member-checking a recorded draft from an interview is a great way to enhance the validity of a study. Another technique was through triangulation of responses. Stake (2010) claims that qualitative researchers triangulate their evidence, meaning they develop habits to review the facts to ensure accuracy. The researcher used this method during the interview phase, by summing up the information participants provided, and then allowing the participants to acknowledge their response or add to their statements.

External validity in qualitative research occurs when the researcher has reached saturation after interviewing participants. Creswell (2013) asserts that saturation occurs when data begins to be repeated among interview participants. When this occurs, the researcher can feel confident they have exhausted the data available in the field, and any further interviews would likely return information that had already been discovered through another candidate.

Riessman (2008) note that due to its nature of inquiry, a narrative study can have as little as one or two participants. However, in this study, the researcher found saturation was achieved after six interview participants (two from each leadership position).

Trustworthiness

Unlike reliability and validity, the trustworthiness of a qualitative research study is based on its worth (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order for a researcher to convey the importance of the findings, they must persuade others that the information is worth paying attention to, and worth trusting for its usefulness and relevance (1985). Readers need to be assured that the information in the study is not misleading, full of bias, or packed with invalidated data. This can be accomplished through establishing: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

Credibility in a research study refers to the confidence one can have that the findings are the truth, or an accurate account of what actually transpired (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In a narrative qualitative study, the goal of the researcher is to gain an accurate depiction of the subjects lived experiences in order for the audience to gain the proper understanding of what happened (Riessman, 2008). Techniques for establishing credibility in a research study include: triangulation, member-checking, peer debriefing, and prolonged engagement (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). In this study, the researcher used a form of member-checking, by recording participant interviews, then providing them with a written transcription of the information to check. Allowing participants to check and edit their own narratives for facts creates a trust between the findings in the study and the readers that ensures the study has credibility (2006).

The transferability of a qualitative study is a term which describes the ability of the research findings to be applicable when transferred to another context or environment (Cohen &

Crabtree, 2006). If a study is meant to be a guide for other users to replicate the findings, then the transferability of the information will be crucial to the readers. If the findings are not easily transferable, then the study will not have a meaningful impact to its intended audience. Lincoln and Guba (1985) claim the optimum way to reflect transferability in a study is to provide a thick description. A thick description is a detailed account of lived experiences obtained from a participant that can be arranged and coded to reflect patterns of cultural and social relationships (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, the researcher transcribed all interview content from the participants, and took careful case notes. The information was then coded and placed into themes, which reflect the unique environment and challenges each participant faced. From that information, readers should be able to determine how the findings can transfer to their own institutions, where employee engagement can be inspired.

Dependability in a research study proves that the findings are both consistent and replicable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This can be found through inquiry audits or research saturation (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Saturation occurs when the researcher makes the subjective determination that no new data can be found if interviews continued due to the consistent and repeated results from multiple sources (Creswell, 2012). When an external audit or research saturation has been achieved without much variation, readers can trust and depend on the study to be replicated in their own context. For this study, the researcher's goal was to create a guide for other senior administrators to use in their attempt to inspire employee engagement. Leaders who learn from the lived experiences and narratives of others can be inspired to replicate the examples of engagement in their own institutions.

Confirmability is a term which describes "a degree of neutrality, or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or

interest” (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). In order for readers to trust that any study participants were internally motivated to provide unique stories, a researcher must not guide or coach the participant into their responses. By doing this the researcher will validate that all findings were justified without bias, and create more meaning and trust for the audience (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, the researcher accomplished a sense of confirmability by establishing research questions that were not loaded with bias. For example, while the researcher had data to support the specific rapid changes that had occurred within the NCCCS in the past five years, no questions addressed the specific changes. Instead, the researcher asked the participants what changes they had experienced to get their unique narratives without bias.

Transition and Summary

In this study, the researcher sought to understand how transformational leaders were inspiring employee engagement within the NCCCS. This section provided information which explained how the research project was conducted, including the purpose statement, the role of the researcher, why specific participants were chosen, why a narrative inquiry qualitative study was chosen, and how it helped the researcher answer the research questions. Section two also included how data was collected through the use of personal interviews to describe the lived experiences of the participants. Next, information was provided on how the data was coded, analyzed, and stored, in addition to its reliability and validity. The findings collected from the one-on-one participant interviews are discussed in the next section. The responses received were compiled into themes and formatted in a way that will answer the overall research questions for the project.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

In section three the researcher introduced an overview of the study; presented how the research findings related to the research questions posed and the existing literature; and conveyed the application to professional practice, which detailed how the findings were relevant to improve business practices. Additional information was provided which tied the findings to the biblical framework and the researcher's field of study. The researcher also gave some recommendations for future study; offered some closing reflections, which included discovery of biblical principles; and gave a final summary and study conclusions, which discusses how this study closed the research gap in the literature.

Overview of Study

In this narrative qualitative study, the researcher sought to understand how transformational leaders, who work in North Carolina community colleges, inspire employees to engage in their duties despite a rapidly changing environment. Waldman (2010) notes that rapid change in an organization occurs when its employees experience a multitude of change within a short amount of time. There is ample literature to support the negative impact a rapidly changing environment can have on employee engagement with the absence of proper leadership (Bommer, Rich, & Rubin, 2005). Research has also shown that employees who are disengaged in their work lack the necessary motivation to be successful and typically perform below organizational goals (2005). This creates a major dilemma for business leaders who must understand how to motivate employees to engage in their work despite a rapidly changing environment, or face losses in productivity. While leaders can motivate employees through various means and practices, one of the most prominent methods is through the use of inspiration by way of the transformational leadership style (Bass, 1985). Of the four components of transformational

leadership, inspirational motivation involves the ability of a leader to inspire followers to overcome challenges and reach higher objectives than previously thought possible (Ghasabeh, Reaiche, & Soosay, 2015). Leaders who espouse this leadership style often share their vision, encourage innovation and creativity, increase employee self-esteem and self-confidence, serve as a role model, and build relationships and bonds with their employees (Washington, 2007).

Literature on transformational leadership, and its impact on employee engagement, has been well researched and studied. However, the existing research on the topic was almost exclusively quantitative in nature, only showing correlations between the leadership style and engagement. Absent from the literature was qualitative based research, which displayed a firm grasp of what leaders were doing towards inspiring their employees. More specifically, the literature was void of any research that provided the narrative examples of what leaders in North Carolina community colleges were doing to engage their employees as they navigated rapid change. Therefore, in this study the researcher sought to close that gap in the literature by interviewing senior leaders within the NCCCS to discover what lived experiences they would provide. Senior leaders within the community college system include the college president, chief academic officer (CAO), and senior student development officer (SSDO), who all directly influence employee engagement through their decision-making and administrative position.

The main research question for this study was: How do leaders within the NCCCS inspire employee engagement in a rapidly changing environment? Four additional questions were considered to support the main research question, which included: What rapid changes in the NCCCS are causing employees to potentially disengage? What experiences do transformational leaders have in motivating employees to overcome challenges in order to engage in their work? What methods do transformational leaders use to develop employees into

future leaders? How do transformational leaders know they have inspired employees to engage? To answer these questions, the researcher randomly selected one third of the senior leaders from the NCCCS to take the MLQ-5X survey, which determined which leaders possessed a transformational leadership style. Then, of the leaders who responded and scored over 90% in transformational leadership categories on the survey, the researcher randomly selected two presidents, two CAOs, and two SSDOs. Those six individuals were then asked a series of 17 interview questions (see Appendix G), which were written to align with the main research questions, while staying within the conceptual framework of the study. During the interviews, each participant provided narratives with detailed information describing their personal lived experiences. The individual narratives included stories of how each participant had inspired employees through various means in their careers. To protect each participant's identity, the researcher assigned a letter and number to all six interviewees, which corresponded with their job title and the order they were interviewed (President 1 = P1, President 2 = P2, CAO 1 = C1, CAO 2 = C2, SSDO 1 = S1, SSDO 2 = S2). After each recorded interview, the researcher transcribed the audio files into written form, and provided a copy to each participant in order to check for accuracy. Next, the researcher uploaded the interview transcripts into the online software program Dedoose, which assisted with coding and further analysis. The findings were then aligned with the proper research questions, and further related to the conceptual framework. During this step, five unique themes emerged that answer the research questions, while providing the understanding and guidance the researcher was seeking. Additionally, an unexpected overarching theme emerged that tied all the research back to the literature on transformational leaders.

The first theme concentrated on inspirational activities described by the leaders. The second theme focused on rapid changes that occurred in the NCCCS through the vantage point of each participant. The third theme included how each leader handled overcoming challenges the rapid changes were causing. The fourth theme dealt with how leaders invested in their employees to create future leaders. Finally, the fifth theme centered on how leaders knew they had inspired their employees.

In summary, the researcher heard many great stories of inspirational activities, initiatives, and personal encounters that increased employee motivation, which are further detailed in the following section. The examples given by the interview participants fully answered each of the research questions, while also fitting within the conceptual framework of the study by embracing the core elements of transformational leadership. Of the themes discovered through each interview participant, one overarching finding emerged. Employee inspiration does not come from any one specific action or method. Instead, inspiration occurs as a result of leaders displaying transformational traits in the relationships they have with followers. Further, the leaders who described spiritual actions, such as praying over employees, experienced a higher level of connection with their staff.

Presentation of the Findings

The following presentation of the findings in this narrative qualitative study included major themes, sub-themes, activities, and stories that all contain conclusions that address the main research questions initially posed. The information used to create each of the themes was derived from seventeen interview questions asked to the six selected transformational leaders from within the NCCCS. In addition to answering the research questions, the findings contain multiple references to the literature described in section two, while also relating back to the

conceptual framework. The core focus of this study, which was apparent throughout the findings, was on inspirational motivation, a component of transformational leadership. Bass (1997) claims that leaders who espouse inspirational motivation place great emphasis on inspiring their followers to perform or engage at a higher level. Albrecht (2010) added that the use of transformational leadership has served as a catalyst for employee engagement in the workplace.

After interviews were conducted of the six participants, and subsequent transcripts were created, the researcher began the practice of coding the information and found 65 themes. Once the themes were identified, the researcher went through a process of merging similar codes and removing themes that did not align with the research questions or conceptual framework. After the findings were scaled down five main themes, and a handful of sub-themes emerged and were centered on the five research questions. Because this study utilized a narrative methodology, many of the participant examples presented are in the form of stories or lived experiences. In addition to the five major themes, one overarching theme was discovered in responding to the main research question. Those findings are listed below, along with a basic summary at the end of each theme heading.

Theme One – Narratives of Inspirational Activities

The first major theme identified in this study was based on narrative responses found in interview questions one, five, eleven, and thirteen. Each of these questions prompted the leaders to share specific experiences they had in attempting to engage their employees through inspirational activities. For example, question five asked for general stories of inspiration, while question eleven and thirteen asked participants to offer experiences of sharing their vision, or how the transformational trait of motivation was used to overcome challenges. While other

emerging themes provided important information as well, this particular theme directly related to the first overall research question, which sought to find examples of how leaders within the NCCCS inspired their employees to engage despite rapid changes. The following sections were repeated practices mentioned in the leader interviews, which are an effort to understand exactly how inspiration takes place.

Communication. The first common activity among the transformational leaders interviewed was methods of communicating with their employees. Bass, Avolio, and Atwater (1996) claim that leaders who engage in inspirational motivation frequently create ways to effectively communicate with their followers to increase engagement. While research suggests solid communication practices be used to increase engagement, it does not describe how this should be accomplished, or provide any methods a leader should use to go about effectively communicating. After interviewing the participants in this study, narratives of three transformational practices emerged that all address increasing communication with followers.

Campus-wide meetings. One transformational activity that focused on increasing communication was campus-wide meetings, which was exclusively mentioned by participants P1 and P2, who were presidents. P2 shared that these “all employee meetings”, take place twice each semester, and have an agenda full of sharing everything that is happening in the college to make sure all employees have a firm understanding of where the institution is towards achieving major goals. Further, the all employee meetings provide a forum for faculty and staff to ask questions to become more confident in their job duties, and to get an idea of where the president’s vision lies. Faculty and staff are also given the opportunity to learn about potential areas of concern, and are invited to offer suggestions to help alleviate those concerns. P1 described a similar experience that focused on financial and budgetary information. P1

explained how it is important for employees to grasp where the college's money is going, what is funding major projects, and how the institutions funds are getting spent. Additionally, P1 takes the opportunity during the campus-wide meetings to honor the accomplishments of faculty or staff members who had achieved something since the last meeting. By publicly honoring them, P1 hoped to motivate others to strive towards achieving milestones as well, while celebrating in the success of colleagues. Finally, P1 described giving employees the opportunity to hear the vision formed for the college, and asking them to take ownership of their part in seeing the vision come to pass.

Committees. Another communication related activity discussed by participants was the practice of creating and utilizing committees. C2 provided some narrative examples of how committees were not being used correctly, and how C2 helped reformulate them to address rewriting policies and procedures. C2 claims that by empowering the employees to have a say in policy and procedure writing within the committees, the college saw an increase in workplace morale and overall employee engagement as well. One example provided was how the academic affairs committee helped rewrite the college's late class add policy to more effectively handle late student registration. C2 explained that, "doing more to get involvement out of our committees, will give us better marks on shared governance, and communication, and will help us see people more engaged" (Personal interview, August 16, 2017).

P2 also shared very similar stories to C2's accounts in terms of needing to recreate employee committees. P2 stated that after coming on board as president, "I thought we could do a better job and be more inclusive in our internal governance, so we recreated our committee structure and made it have more representation" (Personal interview, August 18, 2017). P2 explained that the college did not have any employee governance, so an employee senate,

administrative council, and staff senate was created. Next, after creating the governance structure, P2 assigned projects to each group in order to address some of the overarching goals of the college. P2 described that communication practice as vital towards engaging the employees in taking ownership of the college's success.

Fostering collaboration. The final example of a communication activity includes fostering collaboration. Three of the participants interviewed mentioned the importance of collaboration among employees, and between administration and employees. For example, S2 stated:

I firmly believe in a collaborative approach. I mentioned before that we do regular staff meetings and I like to have as many people at the table as possible. I like to hear all different perspectives and when there are decisions that need to be made, or if there are problems or challenges that we need to figure out solutions to, I want everybody to have input and not just myself (Personal interview, August 28, 2017).

Participant C2 described the practice of fostering collaboration as “building a group of people that you can rely on and building that sense of family to help them engage in their work” (Personal interview, August 16, 2017). Additionally, C2 mentioned inspiring employees to take the initiative in solving problems themselves by collaborating with one another without feeling the need to seek advice from administration. Eddy (2013) claims that such a transformational activity is imperative for a leader seeking to inspire employee engagement while in the midst of rapid change.

Personal motivation. After communication, the next major inspirational activity discovered through participant interviews was personal motivation. Freeborough (2012) claims that transformational leaders often encourage their followers through personal motivation by

inspiring them to accomplish more than they envisioned. An example of this practice was explained by participant C2, describing an administrative assistant who complained of being offended by repeatedly being left out in the dark. In the narrative, C2 explained that the employee revealed that she was not included in departmental meetings, and how that left her without knowing any information happening around the college. After hearing of the administrative assistant's complaint, C2 changed several processes to allow that employee to be part of the departmental meetings, and to receive departmental emails. Then, that opened the door for the employee to begin offering ideas on improvements; something departmental assistants were previously not enabled to do. Such a story of personal motivation depicts exactly how a transformational leader should look to provide employees the opportunity to reach new heights.

S2 provided a second example, and described meeting with employees on a consistent basis to discuss problems, challenges, and solutions as a team. S2 noted that involving employees in decision-making activities personally motivates them to engage in their jobs. "I feel like that is a good way to keep people motivated and helps keep them from feeling like their just caught in the same cycle and routine of doing the same thing day in and day out" (S2, personal interview, August 28, 2017). Specifically, S2 pointed out that leaders often lose sight of the impact they have on their staff, and need to be reminded that seeking out employees' perspectives not only creates opportunities to solve problems in a different way, it also enables the employees to grow and develop as leaders as well.

Having fun. A specific personal motivation activity mentioned by two of the interview participants was having fun with staff. C2 described how administrators often get caught up in focusing entirely on employee performance and forget they need to have fun as well. For

example, C2 noted that having a sense of humor is a great way to ease tensions in the workplace and increase engagement. In a narrative account, C2 explained:

There's a lot of ways that I try to infuse fun into the workday. I try to insert some humor into every meeting so people get a good laugh of the day. If you come into my office, I guarantee you it will not look like the typical vice president office. I am a big Star Wars fan, and I have several Lego sets that are in there, because I believe just having fun makes people see me as more approachable, and makes it easier to connect people that otherwise may not walk in my office. (Personal interview, August 16, 2017).

Participant P1 also shared the importance of having fun with staff to engage them in their duties. The rationale behind the engagement activity was that employees need to enjoy their jobs, or they will disengage no matter what a leader attempts to do. Therefore, P1 shared a unique story of having fun while engaging employees. In the narrative account, P1 described using a fictional squirrel to humor employees during meetings, events, and other conversations. In the narrative account P1 explained:

I will put a picture of a squirrel in a presentation with a caption like, "hang in there". Now, employees ask me when the squirrel pictures are coming. This past April, our taxidermy basically stuffed a squirrel on a plank and gave it to me to hang in my office, along with a "hang in there" award. So, you have to have fun with employees. I am going to continue to have fun with them, and continue the tradition of having the squirrel show up to give messages, and I think it will continue to help me inspire people. (Personal interview, August 11, 2017).

Such accounts of having fun with employees can be interpreted as a form of increasing optimism in the workplace. Bass, Avolio, & Atwater (1996) notes that such activities are a trait of inspirational motivation found in transformational leadership.

Praying for employees. Another specific example of personal motivation that surfaced during participant interviews was the inspirational activity of prayer. Two of the participants described using this practice that they believed had the ability to impact employee engagement on multiple levels. For example, S1 mentioned getting up every morning and lifting up the employees in prayer while getting prepared for the day. While the employees may not be aware of the activity, S1 noted how spending time in prayer sets the stage for what God may want to do during the day. Then, at the workplace, employees know they can come to share issues, struggles, or challenges, and they will be covered in prayer. This practice opens the door for building trust and strong relationships between employees and administration. Washington (2007) asserts that building relationships and bonding with employees is an important trait of a transformational leader, which strengthens engagement among employees, even in the midst of change.

Providing resources. In addition to communication and personal motivation, another sub-theme that emerged from participant interviews was involvement in providing resources to employees. While the larger theme from this section focused on discovering inspirational activities found in questions one, five, eleven, and thirteen, the sub-theme of providing resources also utilized interview question six, which asked participants what resources they had used to improve employee performance. McWade (2014) notes that transformational leaders seek to maintain employee trust by providing them with the resources they need to not only do a job, but also grow in their positions. Participant S1 exemplified that statement, by communicating the

importance of training within the college. A specific example that was shared included a time when S1 saw a need within the student services department to improve the customer service. Understanding the issues were likely rooted in the need for more training, S1 went to the college's president and requested the necessary money to send the appropriate individuals to receive customer service training outside of the organization. Not only was that a necessary move for the betterment of the college, it instilled trust in the employees that their leader cared about them and wanted to invest in their future. Such a story further points to two more specific examples of leaders providing resources found in professional development and use of technology.

Professional development. The topic of professional development in an organization is not unique to transformational leadership, or community colleges. However, providing professional development as a resource for employees is one way to accomplish seeing an increase in employee engagement and productivity (Jha & Kumar, 2016). Further, research has shown that organizations that create a supportive environment, open the door for more productive professional development opportunities, increase the level of training effectiveness, and decrease the likelihood an employee will spend unnecessary time and energy trying to achieve incorrect outcomes (Travisano, 2016). Professional development was mentioned by all six interview participants, as being a method of providing resources that should come standard in the community college setting. Participant S1 described experiences of being a benefactor of professional development opportunities in the past. In turn, S1 vowed to continue the practice of giving employees that same opportunity to be developed, even if funds were tight and something had to be given up. P1 described requiring employees to participate in professional development opportunities as part of the employee evaluation process. P1 noted that the one drawback

sometimes is the cost; however, P1 gave examples of leveraging resources internally so employees had the opportunity to participate in development. Also mentioning the high monetary cost of professional development, C1 explained that recent declines in funding had drastically reduced the professional development opportunities outside of the organization. However, despite the lack of funds, C1 gave examples of internal professional development opportunities created for employees, which still meant a lot toward their engagement.

Examples of professional development ranged from outside conferences and trainings, where employees learned from industry leading speakers, to internal mini-seminars, where speakers were brought in to train staff. Participant C2 even described encouraging employees to seek out their own professional development, or choose options that were meaningful to them. P2 also mentioned a similar process, which was reflected as one of the six major goals in the five-year strategic plan. The most noteworthy point to each professional development story, was that each activity seemed to increase employee engagement and then performance, all while developing the employees into stronger individuals.

Use of technology. Another specific example of providing resources is a leader's use of technology to better engage employees. While only three of the six participants provided stories that included the use of technology, all participants eluded to it in some way. By far, participant P1 mentioned technology the most, citing several stories of internal changes that began using technology, where it was previously absent. One such example P1 provided was moving the college towards incorporating requisitions via the computer instead of on paper. Even though that seemed like small change, P1 described how it drastically reduced the amount of wait time employees took to get things done, while making them more efficient in the process. By

incorporating small changes to use technology more, P1 discovered that many employees were found to be happier in their jobs, and more willing to embrace changes.

An experience shared by participant S1 reflected a mandated change in software the college was using, which created a lot of angst among employees. However, S1 described sitting down with each employee and systematically working through any obstacles so the college could move forward. In a similar story, C1 noted how the college had started using the Internet to increase online training options for faculty and staff, which also assisted with costs.

Shared vision. The last sub-theme within the inspirational activities section involves the use of a shared vision to inspire employee engagement. Basham (2012) notes that a trait of transformational leadership includes communicating a shared vision with employees, in order to provide a sense of strategy towards overcoming obstacles. Interview question number eleven was used to discover any experiences the participants had towards sharing their vision with employees to inspire them. Based on the responses, every participant had a unique story that involved sharing their vision, and how the employees responded. For example, C2 described the importance of providing detailed information to employees when explaining why they were to do a specific task. By taking the time to share the plan with the employees, the door was opened for learning and development. Participant S1 offered stories of sitting down and doing a SWOT analysis with employees when discussing major projects. Further, S1 stated, “I think it’s important to open vision casting up and give everyone an opportunity, or level playing field. It’s inspiring to give them confidence and make sure they are comfortable in expressing themselves” (Participant interview, August 10, 2017).

Removing barriers. Part of sharing a leader’s vision is to remove the barriers that could be preventing employee engagement or inspiration. Participant P1 described several examples of

why that task is so important for transformational leaders in the NCCCS. In a specific example P1 stated:

You have to support them by removing barriers and getting them the equipment that they need in their classrooms. As a faculty member, there is nothing worse than to go into your classroom and find out your equipment doesn't work as you stand in front of 25 to 30 students. I have heard stories of faculty who could not get their overhead projectors to work for several weeks in a row, or having to deal with old, slow computers that take forever to respond. When faculty are put in that situation they feel vulnerable. So, I try to do everything in my power to inspire them to engage by removing obstacles and giving them the tools they need to do their jobs right. (Personal interview, August 11, 2017).

In a similar example, participant C2 explained how removing barriers was the difference between saying something and doing something to assist employees. Further, when employees see that their leader is going out of the way to remove the obstacles that hinder success, it creates an internal desire to engage and perform well as a way of appreciating the leader's efforts.

Summary of theme one. In summary the first major theme discovered from participant interviews directly answered the main research question of this study. The activities and examples provided from participant narratives gave many references of what transformational leaders are doing to engage their employees despite the many rapid changes within the NCCCS. In addition to answering the main research question, theme one also provided an overall view of the conceptual framework of this study, by describing how each transformational leader used inspiration and motivation to engage employees. While the activities in theme one provided a baseline understanding of how inspiration was taking place, it does not speak to the experiences

of rapid change each leader was facing while attempting to inspire employees. The next theme more appropriately addresses that gap in the literature.

Theme Two – Rapid Change and Associated Challenges

The next major emerging theme identified from the personal interviews gave examples of rapid changes, and the associated challenges, as depicted in the narrative accounts provided for questions two, three, and twelve. Those interview questions asked for descriptions of institutional rapid changes within the past five years, the impact they had on employees, and challenges the changes may have caused while leaders were attempting to inspire their employees. While the review of professional and academic literature provided examples of rapid change experienced in community colleges around the country, the researcher felt it was necessary to hear the unique stories of rapid change and associated challenges from each participant. Not only were the interview findings in agreement with the professional literature, the narrative examples from each participant also revealed unique challenges found in North Carolina community colleges as a result of the rapid changes. The following identified examples directly address the second research question of this study, which asked what rapid changes in the NCCCS were causing employees to potentially disengage. Additionally, each finding ties back to the conceptual framework for this study by providing the rapid changes employees are experiencing, which prompt the need to understand how transformational leaders are inspiring engagement.

Enrollment variations. Kalleberg and Dunn (2015) claim the NCCCS experienced rapid changes in enrollment within the past five years. Such change was likely experienced due to the changes to economic conditions after the recession in the late 2000s. Unsurprisingly, several of the interview participants mentioned enrollment variations when asked what rapid

changes their college had experienced. All of the participants described varying degrees of loss to their college's enrollment. For example, P2 had only been at the college a few years, but had already experienced a rapid decline in enrollment, which was attributed to declining unemployment in the college's service area. P2 further described how the economic conditions during the recession led to a high unemployment rate, and a high demand for community college education. However, as the economy improved and jobs became available, less students sought out the services of the community college. S2 described how the loss of enrollment had taken an extreme toll on the college due to the financial resources tied to student enrollment. As students went back to work, the money the college received from the State of North Carolina decreased as well. S2 then told several stories of faculty and staff who had difficulty concentrating on assigned job duties because of constant worry that their positions may soon be on the chopping block if the enrollment decreases continued. This dilemma in employment disengagement was further supported through the narrative accounts provided by participant P1, who described having to personally make the decision to let staff go, choose not to replace vacancies, and consider cutting degree programs, due to low enrollment.

Funding. Another sub-theme relating to rapid changes within the NCCCS is the inconsistent amount of funding each institution receives to address the increasing needs expected by their communities. Myran (2013) claims that while many funding models exist, most are largely based on student enrollment. Since student enrollment has been in decline across the NCCCS in recent years, many institutions have taken a hard hit in their funding, which has caused a multitude of challenges for leaders. For example, P2 described having a difficult time keeping employees because they are unable to make the amount of money needed for their skill level. P2 stated:

Just keeping yourself staffed while undergoing big fluctuations in your funding, particularly when you are already on a shoestring budget the first place, is very difficult. Just a 10% change, or even a 5% change in your funding can be huge. Especially when 80% of your money is going to salary in the first place. So, when you lose 10% of your overall budget, but 80% of it is already stuck in salaries in the first place, you have really lost 25% of your funding. All that has to be manipulated, and with that instability you are having to make a lot of changes to try to effectively accomplish all of your different missions. (Personal interview, August 18, 2017).

Those same issues were mentioned by C1, who further described how nearby universities were able to pay more, and therefore a lot of staff would get just enough experience at the community college to leave for a higher paying position down the road. In a similar complaint, S2 described examples of how a lack of funding had impacted college's ability to meet the needs of the students. "We have had to deal with the age-old do more with less mentality, and that takes a toll or puts stress on everyone" (S2, personal interview, August 28, 2017). However, the funding problems in community colleges aren't new. P2 claims that even ten years ago when enrollment was up, the funding issues were still present because the community colleges had more students to serve, which required more money to provide the education and services. What has plagued the community colleges in the past five years is the rapid decline in funding due to quickly changing enrollment, coupled with the higher cost of doing business, such as a rise in cost for materials and equipment, and pressure to provide more services. All of these issues align with MacAulay, Yue, and Thurlow's (2010) statements that senior administrators at community colleges need to work with their State legislatures to change the funding model, or risk losing valuable employees who are doing more with less.

Organizational change. Overcoming organizational changes is one of the biggest challenges employee face within an institution (Thompson, 2010). Inside community colleges, organizational change is typically due to turnover within the president's office, as their national average for term length is every five years (Rabey, 2011). Organizational changes in a community college can impact employee performance and engagement, particularly if the changes are not clearly communicated (Dickerson, 2000). These points from the academic literature were all validated and personally experienced by the participants of this study. For example, C1 offered a story involving the negative impact a new president made, which stifled employee performance due to poor communication and the rapid changes brought on by the new president. C1 stated:

Actually we got a new president five years ago, and just recently found out we are getting new president again this year. We went five years ago from a very laid-back, very old-fashioned president to, a very modern forward-thinking president, who pretty much came in five years ago and turned things upside down. There was a lot of things that did need to be changed and improved; however, all of the processes and procedures were dumped overnight and everything that everyone knew how to do was just changed. It was just different. And there was a lot of confusion, and a lot of unhappiness, and the change was too much too fast. I am not saying it wasn't needed, but it was just too much too fast. (Personal interview, August 9, 2017).

In addition to C1's comments, participants C2, S1, and S2 all mentioned presidential changes that impacted the engagement of employees. All experiences given were negative to varying degrees. However, it was interesting to find that participants P1 and P2 (both presidents) also described rapid organizational changes, except they viewed the experiences from a positive

standpoint, likely because they were the ones implementing the changes. Specifically, P1 described an experience of implementing sweeping technology related improvements that brought about rapid, but effective changes. Through P1's perspective, the immense need for the changes at the college validated any discomfort employee may have felt.

Added responsibility. Another area of organizational change that was not part of the initial research that came up in participant interviews was the impact of added responsibilities to employees. For example, both S2 and C2 provided narrative examples of budget cuts that prompted departmental rifts and shifting responsibilities. S2 noted, "The impact of rapid change in our institution has caused instability. For example, we have had to absorb additional duties and responsibilities due to restructuring and reorganization, again linked back to the adjustments for the budget decline" (Personal interview, August 28, 2017). Participant C2 provided a detailed account of a department chair who complained about experiencing poor performance in every aspect of the job because of the enormous amount of work that had been added to the typical duties. These examples of added responsibilities seem to substantiate the claims of Yadav (2016), which pointed to how too much absorption in one's role can lead to burnout, which negatively impacts performance and eventually disengagement and job dissatisfaction.

Creating buy-in. Another aspect of organizational change that proved to be a challenge for leaders in their attempt to inspire employees was creating buy-in. Participant S1 explained the challenges of motivating employees to engage in the college's plans, when so many issues were present. By their account, it is extremely difficult to reel employees back in and inspire them to engage when organizational changes are occurring too fast. Participant C2 described a story of an employee who created a new advising model for the college, but had an extremely difficult time getting others to join in. The college had experienced a lot of organizational

change, which had in turn made a lot of employees wary of accepting new initiatives. However, with the guidance of C2, the employee was able to get the buy-in needed and eventually got the advising initiative off the ground.

Success initiatives. Thirolf (2017) described how a numerous amount of success initiatives in the past five years have placed a heavy burden on employees within community colleges. A review of the academic literature revealed many examples of success initiatives within community colleges, such as improvements to graduation and completion (Hicks, West, Amos, & Maheshwari, 2014; Woods, 2014), student access and retention (Tschechtelin, 2011); academic learning outcomes (O'Banion, 2012); and career readiness (Parker, 2010). While these initiative in and of themselves can prove beneficial to students and organizations, changes to all of them at once puts a heavy burden on employees who have to implement and measure the changes. These statements were all verified and reiterated by several of the participants, who also added additional success initiatives unique to North Carolina community colleges. For example, participant S1 described changes to both local and state processes dealing with admissions that have caused a lot of internal confusion and angst. Participant S2 specifically detailed the changes implemented by the NCCCS to redesign developmental reading and math, which altered both classroom instruction, and the processes handled by enrollment staff. Additionally, S2 noted changes by the NCCCS to implement a new placement test, changes in federal guidelines on Title IV, gainful employment, and Title IX. Each change greatly impacted the amount of work staff had to undertake to ensure proper implementation, which created anxiety and discord. Participant C1 also described similar changes, with specific stories of how the changes impacted every department and caused a lot of internal turmoil when the system did not release instructions on how to implement some of the change. Finally, participant C2 added

how for a while the college was experiencing initiative fatigue, where every employee was so tired of change that they did not believe they could take any more.

Summary of theme two. This emerging theme, and its sub-themes, provided responses to the second research question, which sought to find out what rapid changes in the NCCCS were causing employees to potentially disengage. While a review of the academic literature provided a general idea of rapid changes found nationwide, the research was void of what rapid changes were uniquely found in the NCCCS. All of the stories provided by participant's interviews gave those specific examples that were not present in the literature. Additionally, the narrative accounts of rapid change further constituted the need to understand how leaders inspire employees to engage despite the rapid changes described. The next theme concentrated on experiences by each participant to overcome the challenges their institutions faced.

Theme Three – Experiences to Overcome Challenges

The third major theme identified in this study stemmed from the narrative responses found in interview questions nine, twelve, and thirteen. Each of these questions prompted the leaders to describe challenges, and methods used to overcome challenges, to motivate and inspire employees. Question nine specifically asked about innovation and creativity, while question twelve sought to understand specific barriers or challenges leaders had with their inspiration efforts. The information provided in this emerging theme addressed the third research question, which asked what experiences transformational leaders had towards motivating their employees to overcome the unique challenges they faced. The following sub-themes, include activities, traits, or actions each described by the participants towards overcoming challenges.

Being supportive. All six interview participants described narrative examples that included being supportive of employees as a way to overcome the various challenges that they

faced. In the academic literature, Yukl (1989) explains that a transformational leader often shows consideration for followers by being supportive, showing concern, and investing in their general welfare. Additionally, when employees feel supported, they are more likely to engage in their work, and overcome obstacles in the way. This research was substantiated in the participant interviews. For example, P2 described investing time and energy into staff in order to show them the care and support they need. More importantly, P2 spoke of the propensity of employees to make mistakes, and how making mistakes is natural and should be supported rather than exclusively disciplined.

In another example, P1 described providing a good working environment as being supportive of employees and the work they do. For instance, P1 noted how the college has invested heavily on remodeling the dilapidated buildings on campus, including giving certain areas new walls, carpet, and even office furniture. As P1 explained, “Honestly, we really did not have the money to do all that, but I was committed to giving them a revitalized space to make it uplifting and increase their morale and motivation to engage in their work” (P1, personal interview, August 11, 2017). Finally, S1 noted how employees seem to become more engaged, even in the face of rapid change, when they feel genuinely included. S1 described a story of a staff member who rose to a higher level of performance once she felt included in some decision making processes. S1 further noted that such investments in people often lead to improve performance, and a much higher engagement than previously experienced.

Fostering innovation and creativity. Another action the interview participants described was fostering innovation and creativity in their employees. Washington (2007) claims that transformational leaders are often found encouraging innovation and creativity among their followers, as a way of developing them to reach beyond their previously realized potential.

Based on the responses to interview question nine, which asked for examples of leaders inspiring innovation and creativity, S1 described consistently empowering employees to come up with solutions to complex issues on their own, then sharing with the group. Participant C2 gave a specific story, which detailed an employee who took the institutions existing advising model and improved it to be more efficient and effective for both faculty and students. Similarly, P2 described how innovation and creativity became one of the college's annual goals after P2 became president. P2 posited that community colleges need to be at the forefront of innovation based on the unique needs it experiences. "We constantly have new technologies to look at, new generations of students with new expectations. That means we have to constantly be on the lookout for ways to adapt" (P2, personal interview, August 18, 2017). While simply fostering innovation does not necessarily impact employee engagement, the process of equipping employees to be innovative, or allowing them the opportunity to step up and use their creative abilities, can inspire engagement.

Giving employees credit and recognition. In an attempt to overcome the negative outcomes associated with taking on more work, and dealing with a lack of resources or funds, leaders can try to engage employees by giving credit or offering to recognize them in front of their peers. Bass (1985) noted that offering follower's recognition is a transformational activity that helps support their development. As participant C2 put it, "I really believe in giving credit where credit is due. I always try to make sure that anyone who has done anything gets the appropriate praise and recognition for the work that they have done" (Participant interview, August 16, 2017). Each of the six participants told stories or gave examples where they had offered recognition to employees for hard work. For example, P1 described working through the

executive secretary to send encouraging notes to employees who had achieved something, or signing a resolution with the board of trustees to honor employee achievement.

Campus kudos. A specific example of giving recognition is program that two different participants described being used in their institutions. The program, called campus kudos, was used by the institutions of participants P2 and S2. As S2 described it:

To improve performance, I believe we try to cultivate a culture of appreciation, while trying to provide a positive reinforcement to let people know that their hard work is seen, appreciated, and valued. It is important to reinforce to employees that they really play a pivotal role in what happens here. To do that, we have an internal system, called the campus kudos system, where people can nominate other staff members and employees based on whatever they may have seen or experienced that person doing that was particularly helpful or beneficial. (Personal interview, August 28, 2017).

In that particular example, the institution uses an employee's peers to nominate them to be honored or recognized. Participant P2 also described using a similar system, which follows the same guidelines of allowing an employee's coworkers the ability to nominate them to get a shout-out in the weekly campus email or publications. As P2 explained, the system is a special way employees can get recognized for their hard work, and hopefully feel supported by the institution.

Salary increases. Four of the six participants interviewed added salary increases as a means to overcome challenges towards inspiration. While increasing an employee's salary can be tied to transactional leadership when it is a result of good performance, it is a transformational approach if the increase is a result of investing in an employee, regardless of performance. Of the instances where salary increases were mentioned in the interviews, each participant seemed

reluctant to offer examples where the practice resulted in a positive outcome. One reason for this reluctance seemed to be conveyed by participant C2, who explained a desire to be able to provide more money for employees, but lamented the institutions inability to do so. Another participant took a more positive spin on the example, by describing the practice as reinvesting in employees. P1 noted that a salary increase is rarely ever a lasting inspirational tool; however, it does provide psychological motivation to employees who feel disheartened when they do not get a salary increase, especially if they feel there are funds to do so. So, while salary increases are not typically a transformational tool, the absence of them can actually contribute to employee disengagement, making it more difficult for leaders inspire and engage.

Finding meaning. The final experience of overcoming challenges described by the interview participants was helping employees find meaning and purpose. Thirolf (2017) noted that employees who have confidence in their identity and purpose are more likely to pass on that success to others. Often, when employees are struggling to engage in their duties, a leader can help them overcome the challenges they are facing by assisting with finding the meaning in their work, or reminding them of their purpose. Participant C2 described occasionally needing to remind employees of the reasons they do what they do in education. An example used was the positive outcomes associated with student success, such as the feeling someone gets watching a student walk across the stage at graduation. P2 added that people inherently want to know that the work they are doing is worth something. If the work being done is effective in improving the quality of life for fellow human beings, then it can provide a sense of purpose for those doing it. S2 noted that there is a responsibility on each leader to discover what intrinsically motivates each individual, and then to align duties and responsibilities with those things.

Summary of theme three. Theme three included narrative examples of activities, methods, and actions leaders took to inspire their employees to overcome the challenges they faced in their unique institutions. While similar to the first theme, this particular theme focused on providing an understanding on activities to overcome challenges, which is another aspect of inspirational motivation that was void in the literature dealing with the NCCCS. The next theme will address another one of the overall research questions, which deals with the transformational trait of developing future leaders.

Theme Four – Stories of Developing Future Leaders

The fourth emerging theme that was discovered through the participant interviews was exploring stories of how transformational leaders developed future leaders from their staff. This theme was a result of the participant responses given from interview questions seven, eight, ten, fourteen, and seventeen. Question seven focused on the various experiences leaders had involving being a role model to their staff, while question eight sought experiences related to building employees' self-esteem. Question ten placed its emphasis on increasing employee self-confidence, while questions fourteen and seventeen asked for experiences dealing with employee development and ideas to use in the future to inspire employees. In addition to addressing these interview questions, this theme directly answered research question four, which asked what methods transformational leaders used to develop employees into future leaders.

Acting as a role model. This sub-theme stemmed from the responses given based on interview question seven, which asked participants what experiences they had being a role model for their employees. Washington (2007) notes that leaders who possess a transformational style often serve as a role model to their staff, which helps build relationships and bonds. The participants interviewed provided narrative examples that proved that statement to be accurate.

For example, C2 told the story of a bright young administrative assistant who was aspiring to do more; however, could not seem to find anything that fit. C2 described acting as a role model in the administrative assistant's life by passing along sound advice, while motivating them to become a future leader. Soon, after a relationship had grown through the inspiring efforts, C2 found out about a position available at the college, and took the opportunity to tell the administrative assistant. C2 went to the position's supervisor and gave the young employee a great reference. C2 then described how the person got the position and is now doing great things at the college. C2 mentioned loving the concept of being a role model for employees and matching them up with positions that ultimately fit their skill set.

Looking at other examples, P1 provided a narrative, which depicted the new student government association (SGA) president at the institution. In P1's example, the newly elected SGA president came on board but did not know a lot about community college governance. P1 described taking the student in and showing them the ropes concerning how to dress at a board meeting, where to sit when the meeting took place, and what to say when called upon for a report. P1 further explained offering the SGA president advice based on personal experiences from the past in order to build confidence. P1 said those actions proved to be inspiring for the student, and ended up helping them be more successful on the board. While these stories provide positive examples of leaders acting in the capacity of a role model, participant P2 noted how important it is that senior administrators in the NCCCS realize that they are being a role model all the time, whether they like it or not. C1 added to that rhetoric by explaining the need for leaders to "walk the talk", and not to ask employees to do something they would not be willing to do themselves.

Teaching. Another sub-theme that describes leaders developing their followers is teaching. C1 provided a great example of this sub-theme, by telling about the development efforts for three deans. C1 described working to teach employees about the various responsibilities of being a leader after being approached by three different deans. C1 described how the employees have experienced both ups and downs in their learning process, but have made great strides along the way, and all should make great leaders one day.

S2 also explained the importance of teaching staff how to lead. In S2's narrative account, an example was mentioned featuring a staff member who brought forth a request to change position titles and adjust salary scales, including a very valid rationale. In order to teach the employee, and give them the opportunity to grow, S2 invited them to join in speaking with the president about the requests. S2 noted how important it is for leaders to develop their employees by giving them some responsibility and letting them gain experiences in a safe environment where they can be supported and have guidance.

Building self-confidence. A third sub-theme for developing future leaders is building self-confidence. This sub-theme comes from the tenth interview question, which asked participants to describe experiences they had building self-confidence in employees through the use of inspiration. S2 noted that self-confidence can be built by providing reassurance to employees and just telling them that their judgment and abilities are trusted. S2 further explained conveying the importance of communicating to people that they are good at what they do, and that everyone is a human, and all will make mistakes. S2 described that employees can get very down on their performance, especially if they are new in their career or role, where there is so much pressure to perform. However, in an act of self-confidence building, leaders need to

encourage and reassure employees, so if they do have a misstep, it will not seem like the end of the world.

Participant P1 provided a narrative example, which included a message of not being fake when attempting to increase employee self-confidence. P1 stated:

A few years ago, I had a profound experience when I went to Dollywood and saw this hilarious comedian at a show there at the park. He was so funny, and made me laugh so much, I decided to go back and see his second show later in the day. However, when I was watching, the second show wasn't quite as good because it was all an act; it wasn't genuine. He laughed at the same cues, told the same jokes, made the same facial expressions. He did everything the same as when I had saw him earlier. So, I looked at that as a life lesson. At first I thought he was just the most genuine, funny person ever. But then, I realized he is just a very skilled actor who was trained to do everything on cue exactly the same the second time. When I saw his act the second time, I was bored, not as entertained, and certainly not inspired. So, I have never been back. So the life lesson I learned is that I have to be real. I have to put my heart and soul into the message I am conveying to my employees. As a transformational leader someone has got to love what they do with all their heart and soul. (Personal interview, August 11, 2017).

Encouraging self-esteem. The next sub-theme of developing future leaders is encouraging self-esteem. This topic is a response to interview question eight, which asked participants to offer times when they increased one or more employees' self-esteem. Much like improving self-confidence, or being a role model, encouraging self-esteem is a character trait of the transformational leadership style (Washington, 2007). Additionally, the benefits of increasing employee self-esteem can drastically improve employee morale and job engagement.

Many of the participants agreed that encouraging self-esteem should be done, however, there was a lot of disagreement in terms of how it should be done. For example, P2 mentioned giving employee's promotions, as a form of increasing self-esteem. S1 spoke of encouraging several female employees who had experienced domestic abuse or neglect. In a more narrative-based example, C1 offered a story of an employee who had worked under a predecessor who was very rough and demeaning. C1 described the employee as having very little self-esteem. However, C1 took the initiative to encourage the employee, who had never finished high school, to go back and obtain an adult high school diploma. Afterwards, the employee ended up enrolling at the college, and began to performance at a much higher level. This example reflects how big an impact a transformational leader can have on another person.

In another example of future leadership development, participant P1 described taking part in several small, but effective practices to encourage self-esteem. First, P1 described working with the administrative assistant to send hand-written notes to employees who had accomplished something, or just needed some encouragement. Another method P1 describe using was sending cookies to employees to show support, gratitude, and care. P1 noted that even though each gesture was small in nature, it meant a lot of employees. Additionally, the small acts of gratitude often turned into opportunities to provide development when employees would come by P1's office to say a simple thank you.

Providing opportunity for growth. The final sub-theme under developing future leaders was providing opportunities for growth. This topic was based on the responses to interview questions fourteen and seventeen, which directly asked leaders to describe how they went about developing employees into future leaders. The entire concept of developing employees is deeply rooted in transformational leadership. Rowold (2014) describes the

function of employee development as one of the core traits of a person who espouses the transformational leadership style. Participant S2 notes how every leader should take a unique opportunity to develop the talent found inside an organization. P1 agreed that developing future leaders, was all about providing them with the opportunity to grow. For example, P1 explained experiencing the loss of some key leadership positions, and how that led the way in reevaluating the vacancies and ultimately finding some great candidates through existing internal employees. Finally, C1 provided a narrative account, which described a campus dean who had a really bad temper. C1 explained speaking with the employee about how the anger issues could cause the employee to lose potential promotional opportunities in the future. Afterwards, C1 offered the employee the chance to participate in various professional development session, in order to work on the dean's temper. Many years later in present day, C1 noted how a senior-level position had come available at a nearby community college, and this particular dean got the position. C1 believes the inspirational efforts provided to the employee transformed them and helped in getting the job.

Summary of theme four. Looking back at theme four, several actions were discussed with interview participants. These included acting as a role model, building self-confidence, encouraging self-esteem, and providing opportunities for growth. Additionally, smaller themes emerged from this study, including teaching, writing hand-written notes, and sending employees cookies. With the exception of the notes and cookies examples, all of the participants interviewed agree on the importance of these items. While some good ideas came out of this response, the main point was to relate to the examples occurring around the NCCCS, with transformational leaders who make things like self-confidence, self-esteem, and acting as a role model one of their primary goals. Overall, this theme provided a suitable response for research

question four, which asked what methods transformational leaders used to develop employees into future leaders. The next theme discussed focuses on the fifth research question, which deals with learning how leaders can know they have successfully inspired employees.

Theme Five – Personal Knowledge of Employee Inspiration

The final emerging theme found in reviewing the participant interviews in this study was gaining a personal knowledge that employee inspiration had actually taken place. The need for this information stems from the fact that just because a leader says inspiration is taking place, does not mean it actually is occurring. The information in this theme comes from interview questions fifteen and sixteen, which asked participants what kind of responses they saw from employees based on their inspirational efforts, and how they knew they had successfully inspired employees. The findings in this area directly answer the fifth research question of understanding how transformational leaders knew they had inspired employees to engage.

Employee verbal response. One of the most direct ways a leader can know that inspiration is taking place is through a verbal response from employees indicating it is occurring. For example, C2 noted, “people will shoot me a random email from time to time and tell me about how I inspired them to work on a project, and now they have more time to get personal things done” (Personal interview, August 16, 2017). S1 also described personal stories of students or staff who came back after a period of time and gave compliments for how they were treated and developed. Finally, P1 offered a narrative account of how vice president’s in the institution worked things out between the two of them when issues occur, then come back to the president to offer solutions. When that occurs, P1 mentioned that they will verbally comment on how they feel empowered to solve problems, and elaborate on how it makes them feel to work under the president.

S2 described a similar experience, which involved staff repeatedly talking about how they feel like they are part of a family at the institution. S2 noted that there has been a lot of work put into building the college staff into a strong unit, while creating a sense of camaraderie. To validate that claim, staff consistently engage in team building activities and discuss how the outcomes make them feel. S2 then described a belief that staff is being inspired because they continually stop by to speak with their supervisor at the end of the day, and make comments geared towards appreciating their place of employment, and the team environment they have.

Improved performance. The second sign of employee inspiration is centered on their performance. Several leaders gave examples of employees who had poor performance; however, through the leader's inspirational efforts, they overcame the odds and saw improvements. In a narrative example, C1 described a faculty leader who had a temper and would lose composure very easily. After speaking with the person and learning of future dreams of being in administration, C1 decided to invest in the employee and provide them the opportunity to take part in professional development and various trainings on self-control. A few years later, that same employee was offered a higher level position at another community college, which was possible in part because of the training provided. Such a description of improved performance is a direct result of the inspirational efforts of C1.

Another quality example was provided by participant S2, who described a counselor that was looking to get more involved. After S2 spent some time investing in the person, the employee brought up the idea of establishing a food pantry on campus. S2 stated that "then she came back and had a proposal drafted and worked with our foundation to secure a pretty substantial grant through a local company to start putting the food pantry and some other supports in place" (Participant interview, August 28, 2017).

Summary of theme five. The fifth emerging theme of this study focused on how leaders know they have inspired their employees. Through the narrative examples provided by the interview participants, two main examples were discovered; verbal confirmation and observed improvements in performance. These examples came from the responses given from questions fifteen and sixteen in the participant interviews. Additionally, an answer was provided to research question five, which sought to understand how leaders could know that their efforts had worked towards inspiring employee engagement.

Overarching Theme – Transformational Leaders Inspire

In seeking to answer the major research question of this study, which focused on understanding how transformational leaders inspire employee engagement through a rapidly changing environment, an unexpected overarching theme emerged. Through seeking to understand what unique activities transformational leaders put in place to implement their inspirational efforts, it became apparent that there is no right answer in determining what best practice helps inspire employee engagement. Instead, the findings seem to suggest that the mere fact that a transformational leader tried to inspire employees to engage through the rapid changes was enough to cause them to do so. As participant P1 noted, “There’s no magic silver bullet. You have to appeal to their hearts...” (Participant interview, August 11, 2017). C1 added, “If a leader will just support their staff, letting them know they care, that is what really matters” (Participant interview, August 9, 2017). Even though this was an unexpected finding in this study, it is supported through the existing literature on transformational leaders as referenced in section one. For example, McWade (2014) exerted that because transformational leaders inspire their followers to reach higher within themselves, employees often develop a trust or relational attachment to the leaders that is not seen with other leadership styles. Additionally, the trust

established in leaders was found to be a faith that they would provide the resources necessary to allow employees to grow in their position and develop as individuals (2014). Therefore, while the findings of this study did provide a wide variety of best practices a leader can implement to improve employee engagement within the NCCCS, which was the main goal of the researcher, it should be considered a substantial finding to know there is no perfect answer. Instead, the most important thing leaders can do to inspire their employees to engage is to show they care by trying. By embodying the traits of a transformational leader described by Bass (1985), leaders can be confident they will experience a higher level of engagement from employees, even despite rapid change.

Applications to Professional Practice

This research is both meaningful and applicable to the professional practice of business. The following paragraphs will provide a detailed discussion on how the findings apply to leaders within the NCCCS in order to improve organizational performance. Additional information will describe how the findings relate to the general field of leadership. Finally, implications of the findings to the biblical framework will be discussed.

Applicability to Professional Business Practice

The findings in this study provided a wealth of knowledge to senior administrators who work in community colleges in North Carolina. Kushell (2013) claims that when businesses experience rapid change, especially over a period of years, it can lead to employee frustrations, obstacles to productivity, feelings of angst towards managers, and disengagement in job duties. The business leaders interviewed in this study all confirmed that rapid changes had been experienced within their institutions over the past five years. Examples of the rapid changes included decreased funding, enrollment variations, initiative fatigue, and legislative changes to

name a few. The review of academic literature in this study, in addition to the experiences provided by the interview participants, all suggest that the rapid changes are causing employee engagement problems among community college faculty and staff. Albrecht (2010) suggested that when employees disengage, they do not deploy their emotions, energies, or passions for conducting their duties. Catteuw, Flynn, and Vonderhorst (2007) note that employee engagement is directly related to workplace productivity. Therefore, the rapidly changing environment of the NCCCS had been a leading cause of employee disengagement, which produced a decrease in productivity, poor customer service, and overall bad experiences for the customer base; the students. With the environment of rapid change continuing for the foreseeable future, community college leaders need ideas or best practices on how to engage their employees.

The findings in this study are relevant for an improved business practice in the NCCCS because the narrative data presented can inform senior leaders on a multitude of things. For example, the themes identified through a review of the participant interviews provided a plethora of knowledge on how current senior administrators are engaging their employees through the rapid change. The findings are full of best practices including activities, processes, events, and suggestions that presidents, CAOs, and SSDOs have implemented to address the engagement problems caused by rapid change. The findings also presented qualitative evidence that the employees were positively responding to the best practices, by becoming more engaged in their jobs. This claim was supported through increased employee productivity, employee testimonials, and advancement opportunities.

Another reason the findings are relevant for an improved business practice in the NCCCS is to influence employee development training at the institutions. McFadden, Miller, Sypawka,

Clay, and Hoover-Plonk (2013) note that there has been a tremendous need for leadership development in community colleges in North Carolina from quite some time. Part of that need has been to strategically prepare for the retirement of an aging workforce. If employee engagement continues to be a large business-related concern in the NCCCS, then leaders should seek to provide ample opportunities for leadership development for their existing faculty and staff to ensure the next generation of leaders is well equipped to take on such roles. The findings in this study offer methods and strategies existing leaders have taken to develop their employees into future leaders. More importantly, the strategies discussed have been met with positive results, as indicated by employee promotions, job changes, and innovative ideas coming directly from the impacted employees. Young leaders coming into the NCCCS can utilize the information found in this study to help make informed decisions on employee development based on what other leaders have attempted and proved valuable.

Finally, the findings in this study should necessitate the need to discover and educate administrators on the importance leadership style has on employees. Because the researcher found that community college employees will engage, despite rapid change, if their leader would model the traits found in the transformational leadership style, the NCCCS should seek to provide professional development opportunities for administrators focused on leadership styles. While it is not likely that every leader will develop into a transformational leader, it is possible for leaders to model some of the traits a transformational leader possesses. This is especially true if they were educated on the benefits a transformational leadership style can bring to the success of employees, and the positive organizational outcomes that come with that success. The findings of this study can then assist in the development process, by offering narrative examples of how ones leadership style has such a positive influence on inspiring employee engagement.

Implications for Leadership

The findings of this study directly relate to leadership based on its focus on the transformational leadership style. As McFadden, Miller, Sypawka, Clay, and Hoover-Plonk (2013) conclude, understanding how leadership styles influence employees should be a high priority for any community college administrator, as it is a very important topic in the field of business and leadership. Taylor-Sawyer (2004) asserted how the transformational leadership style is quickly become more prevalent in the community college setting. Based on the findings of this study, there should be no doubt how effective a transformational leader can be towards increasing employee engagement. More importantly, as Ketter (2008) pointed out, increased employee engagement can lead to higher productivity, customer satisfaction, and employee retention. Each of those outcomes are critical for any successful business organization; however, when applied to the community colleges in North Carolina, they translate to a better environment for students.

The findings of this study revealed multiple avenues a leader could take towards achieving the engagement needed for higher employee performance. This is especially important for community college leaders who must engage their employees in the midst of the rapid changes the NCCCS is facing. The narrative stories and examples each leader provided in this study should leave lasting implications to the field of leadership, as the accounts provide a pathway for proven success other leaders can follow. As participant S2 stated, “One of the benefits of getting older is being able to live and learn and then being able to share those experiences with other people” (Participant interview, August 28, 2017). The advantage this study provides to the field of leadership is the themes, activities, and ideas that came of the participant examples, which were not previously found in the existing academic literature.

Implications for Biblical Framework

The findings of this study fully support the concept and framework presented by the researcher from section one. For example, Hardy (1990) noted that every person has unique gifts, talents, and abilities that were bestowed to them by their creator. Van Duzer (2010) provided a framework that challenged Christian leaders in business to develop and train their employees, while helping them find their gifts for the purpose of creating meaningful work. The type of leader Van Duzer (2010) was describing fits the mold of a transformational leader as defined by Bass (1985). In his work, Bass (1985) noted how transformational leaders inspire or motivate their followers through stimulation or influence to take them to a higher level of desired expectation than they were previously aware. There are many examples of this type of inspirational leadership experience in the Bible, such as the impact Jesus had on his disciples, particularly Peter. A narrative account of this is found in Matthew 16:17-18 when Jesus reinforced the calling on Peter's life by saying, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah... I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (NIV). As formerly stated, that exert from the Book of Matthew exemplifies the transformational leadership Christ often modeled to his followers. He had the unique ability to inspire everyone around him to realize a higher calling on their life than they were previously aware.

The findings in this study further reinforced the inspirational impact transformational leaders have on their followers through the unique narrative examples given by the participants. Of the many examples, activities, and ideas presented, two things stood out that have profound implications to a biblical framework. First is the use of prayer to establish a strong, caring relationship with employees. In the narrative accounts of participant S1, the use of prayer

opened doors for relational inspiration and motivation that may not have been possible in its absence. S1 described praying for employees on a daily basis on the way to work in the morning, in addition to having a strong time of devotion and worship. S1 notes that those activities set the mood and tone for the day before it has even begun. More importantly, S1 stated that making employees aware of the daily prayers, opened the door for requests and inspirational advice. If every Christian leader would take that advice and pray for employees, it would no doubt have large implications on the ability of Christ to work through them to inspire others.

Another finding of this study that has implications for the biblical framework is the overarching theme that was discovered. Out of all the transformational themes, activities, and ideas that participants brought forth, the revelation that inspiration and engagement will likely occur simply because a leader shows followers care, compassion, and service, was profound. This particular finding has parallels to scripture, by observing the life and work of Jesus Christ. Not only did Christ model transformational leadership through his relationship with his followers, he exemplified it through his actions of generosity, love, and devotion, which drew people in. All throughout the New Testament, Christ portrayed the traits of a transformational leader, even inspiring his disciples to engage in sharing his message despite the environmental conditions around them that should have resulted in their disengagement. A perfect example of this is found in John 13:1-17 when Jesus washes his disciple's feet. The action was meant to teach them that service to others was one of their primary callings in leadership. In John 13:15-16 Jesus says, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him" (NIV). Washing their feet was an action that showed the disciples that Christ cared for

them more than they could realize. However, the truth was that the message behind the action spoke louder than the actual task. It was not the fact that Christ washed the dirt off their feet that inspired them to further engage in the Lord's work, it was the relational connection or rapport Christ built with them through such actions that inspired them to engage. Taking from that biblical example, along with the message conveyed through the overarching theme of this study, Christian leaders should seek to inspire their employees to engage as an act of obedience to serve others.

Recommendations for Action

The main purpose for this study was to close the gap in available research by providing an understanding of how transformational leaders went about inspiring employees to engage in their work during a rapidly changing environment. The findings of the research offered many possible examples a leader could utilize to engage employees despite the rapid changes the organization might be experiencing. As stated in section one, the researcher of this study sought to provide both current and future leaders with a best practices guide for employee engagement. While this study provides some practical and proven methods for inspiring engagement, the overarching theme concluded that leaders only needed to embody the characteristics of a transformational leader and show their employees they ultimately care for inspiration to take place.

The best use of this study would be for any senior administrator who works at a community college in the State of North Carolina, since the focal point was on the NCCCS. However, because this study provided an understanding how inspiration is accomplished to improve the engagement of employees, which is a universal concept, the findings could be applied in any organization where leaders seek to inspire employee to engage during rapid

change. The activities, practices, and tactics mentioned by the participants in this study were all based on lived experiences and narratives from within the community college institutions. Therefore, this study should be reviewed and considered by the presidents, CAO's, and SSDO's who work at a community college within the NCCCS. Those individuals most likely have the best opportunity to inspire organizational change, including employee engagement. In addition to these senior leaders, any leader in a community college that is experiencing a similar work environment could also benefit from the findings of this study. It may be possible for individuals who possess other leadership styles to utilize these findings in order to inspire employee engagement. However, because transformational leadership is a style that seeks to inspire employees through building relationships, developing follower potentials, and raising individuals up higher than they could image, other leaders may find these best practices difficult to implement and sustain. The hope is that leaders will use this research towards their professional development opportunities to educate and develop leadership potentials at each college. Because the information provided from the individual interview participants is direct lived experiences from community college leaders, it should have some rapport with other officials.

In order to disseminate this study for use in the NCCCS the researcher can make the published copy available to the system office for the use of any college official who sees value in the research and data. Additionally, the researcher could consider presenting the findings at statewide conferences or workshops, for attendees to learn as best practices. This practice may be beneficial for aspiring leaders who want to learn how to engage their future employees before fully stepping into a leadership position. It would also encourage those leaders to seek further education on their personal leadership style, and to understand how their style influences employees. Further, the researcher would be willing to present the findings as part of a

professional development training at any institution. Finally, the researcher could share the study with the community college associations. Associations are groups of college employees, separated by positions, who gather to learn best practices and glean information from one another. The researcher could be a guest speaker at any association meeting to provide the research and findings as needed.

Recommendations for Further Study

The findings of this study all dealt with narratives from senior leaders within the NCCCS. While their unique stories have opened up an understanding of how such leaders inspire employee engagement, it was limited to their perspectives. One recommendation for further study would be to select a sample of employees within the NCCCS to see their perspective on what they believe causes them to engage in their work despite the rapid changes. It may be discovered that what leaders think works in terms of their inspirational efforts, actually is not working for the employees.

Another recommendation for further research would possibly be to do a case study on one community college to see in detail how the inspiring efforts of the president flowed down to his/her executive team, other administration, and the general faculty and staff within the institution. The case study could determine if the efforts described by the president were perceived in the same light by the other employees, and if the president was as impactful towards engaging employees as originally thought. Research in this area would further reveal if the actions of a college president, while meaning well, could be decreasing employee engagement within an institution. In this research study, there were several statements made by CAOs and SSDOs that would suggest the presidents often caused more stress than they realized.

Finally, it would be interesting to see this study done through the perspective of another leadership style. The transformational leadership style was chosen for this study because the characteristics of such a leader include the practice of inspiration and motivation. However, that does not mean other leadership styles cannot be effective. One idea would be to rewrite the study from the perspective of a transactional leader, which focuses on the give-take relationship between leaders and employees.

Reflections

This research study was both a challenging and rewarding experience. The researcher has been a senior leader in more than one community college in North Carolina, and personally experienced the effects of working in the NCCCS as it went through rapid change. With that bias in mind, the researcher implemented a few safeguards into this study to avoid any bias interfering with the findings. For example, all interview participants in this study had no prior relationship with the researcher. Therefore, none of the participants were aware of any feelings, whether positive or negative, the researcher had concerning the community college system, its rapid changes, or their individual institution. Additionally, the researcher purposely wrote one of the interview questions to ask if the participants felt there had been any rapid changes in their institution, and if so, to explain what they were. By doing this, it allowed the participants to define whether they worked in an environment of rapid change, or if it was just the researcher's assumption that they did. Fortunately, all the interviewees validated the researcher's own experiences, when they each described rapid changes that typified the same issues already assumed.

The responses to the interview questions by the participants were very thoughtful and gave a lot of great narratives of what is being done. On one hand, the goal of this study was to

provide a guide of best practices for future leaders to observe and learn examples of how they could inspire and motivate their employees. While it can certainly act in that capacity, the overarching theme of the study, as already discussed, was a bit surprising. The researcher did not expect the main conclusion to be that it is not what a leader does that matters, it is merely the fact that the leader cared enough to do something that makes a difference. The key learning point from this study is that by espousing a transformational leadership style, a leader will inherently do things that show employees they are cared for. It is that caring attitude, that the leader wants to lift them up and develop them to reach higher than they could have imagined, that causes them to engage in their work and increase performance. So, while a best practice guide will undoubtedly give advice on specific things a leader can do to increase employee engagement, the real answer to unlocking employee potential despite environmental factors that should cause disengagement, is to genuinely show them they matter. Leaders wanting to get more out of employees, increase productivity, or likelihood of staying with the organization, should seek to inspire them by investing time, resources, and energy into developing their potential, building relationships, and just being a support for them.

From a biblical standpoint, the findings of this study further advanced the researchers faith and Christian worldview, that Christ-like transformational leadership is needed in today's workforce. While other forms of leadership may be effective for various work-related functions, the transformational leadership that was espoused by Christ has the power to inspire and motivate people to look past their circumstances and engage in their work, even when the world around them would suggest they give up. Another positive take away from this study is a focus on the power of prayer and Godly influence to transform lives and inspire others. Several of the participants either directly, or indirectly, mentioned using prayer, or relying on their faith to

assist them in inspiring and developing their employees. Through their personal accounts, the use of prayer opened doors for Godly conversation, and allowed for relationship building that may not have been possible in its absence. Finally, an emphasis by the participants placed on growing and developing employees to become future leaders reminded the researcher of the biblical principle of discipleship. Verses such as Matthew 28:19-20, Psalm 32:8, and Romans 12:6-7 all speak of discipleship or training one another in various fashions. Developing others to become what God called them to be is a principle that transcends the Church and is more than appropriate for the workplace. Christian leaders in business should seek to inspire, motivate, and develop those around them to become all the Christ meant for them to be.

Summary and Study Conclusions

The purpose of this narrative qualitative study was to understand how transformational leaders in the NCCCS inspired employee engagement in a rapidly changing environment. The research problem involved a gap in the literature that reflected an understanding of exactly how leaders were going about inspiring employee engagement in North Carolina community colleges, particularly during an environment of rapid change, which research had proven typically causes disengagement. The main goal of the researcher was to learn from senior transformational leaders within the NCCCS what types of activities, ideas, processes, or insights were being done to inspire engagement despite the rapid changes. Through a review of academic literature, the researcher determined that the transformational leadership style was the most appropriate to study, given the leaders inclination to inspire their followers through motivational activities, attitudes, and actions. A narrative methodology was chosen in order to collect data in the form of stories, lived experiences, or examples each transformational leader had encountered in their

attempt to inspire others. A review of the professional and academic literature was conducted, which addressed each area of the conceptual framework for the study.

The study was conducted by first surveying the leadership style of a third of the presidents, CAOs, and SSDOs from the 58 community colleges in North Carolina. Of the participants who completed the survey and scored as a transformational leader, the researcher randomly selected six individuals (two presidents, two CAOs, and two SSDOs) to further interview. Each of the six participants chosen were issued seventeen interview questions, which were written to collect narrative data that would address the five original research questions. Transcripts of each interview were then created and analyzed for potential findings. The researcher originally found 65 codes from the transcripts, which were then narrowed down to five main themes, and one overarching theme. Various sub-themes, activates, and processes were discovered and reported under the main themes.

Finally, the narrative data collected was found to be in agreement with the professional and academic literature on the subject. The themes developed from the participant interviews provided a plethora of narrative examples, ideas, and practices that should prove valuable to future leaders seeking to learn best practices when attempting to inspire engagement from their employees. Each major theme identified fully answered the research questions initially identified. Of the themes, the major takeaway from this study was the overarching theme, which provided an unexpected outcome. That outcome was the revelation that it did not matter which activity, event, or idea a transformational leader attempted in order to inspire employee engagement in the NCCCS. Rather, it was merely the fact that the leader showed care and compassion that made the most difference towards achieving inspiration. Despite all the great ideas each leader shared, the biggest impact came from them attempting anything that showed

they valued the employee over the position. From building relationships, to developing employees into future leaders, being a role-model, or building self-esteem; simply investing time, resources, and energy into the employees was enough to cause them to engage in their work, despite the environment of rapid change that research suggests should cause them to leave. This finding, along with the other examples of inspiration, was exactly what the research was looking for in order to close the gap in the literature. The resulting work should prove to be extremely valuable to leaders in the NCCCS who wish to inspire their employees to engage in the middle of their own rapid changes.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Email

July 27, 2017

Dear Community College Leader:

My name is Michael Coleman, and as a student in the School of Business at Liberty University, I am conducting doctoral dissertation research on understanding how leaders in the North Carolina Community College system inspire employee engagement in the midst of rapidly changing environments. This study will first assess the leadership style of community college presidents, chief academic officers (CAO), and senior student development officers (SSDO) in the NC Community College system through completion of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ 5X). Next, a selection of leaders will be asked to participate in one-on-one interviews. In this qualitative study, I will examine how leaders with a specific leadership style inspire employees to engage in their job duties while experiencing rapid change within their college's work environment.

If you are a president, CAO, or SSDO at a community college in North Carolina, I would graciously request your support. Your participation may be helpful to higher education stakeholders in the NC Community College system as they develop leadership-training programs for prospective community college administrators and others who aspire to properly engage employees towards meaningful results. Approximately 10 to 20 minutes of your time will be needed to complete the MLQ survey, with a possible 60-minute follow-up interview for select respondents. No individual or community college will be identifiable in the final report.

Following completion of the study, I will be sending the results to each of the leaders who participated in the study per request. Your support is essential for this study to be a success.

To participate, go to the consent form attached to this letter and click on the survey link provided. The consent document contains additional information about my research. By clicking on the survey link at the end of the consent information, you will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the survey. Additionally, by clicking on the link and completing the survey you agree to further participate in one-on-one interviews, which will be audio recorded, if you are selected.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely

Michael W. Coleman
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University School of Business
mwcoleman@liberty.edu
252-883-0569

Appendix B: Participant Consent Form

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
this document for use from
7/17/2017 to 7/16/2018
Protocol # 2931.071717

CONSENT FORM

Understanding How Transformational Leaders Inspire Employee Engagement in Rapidly Changing Environments

Michael W. Coleman
Liberty University
School of Business

You are invited to be in a research study to understand how transformational leaders inspire employee engagement in the rapidly changing environment that exists in North Carolina community colleges. You were selected as a possible participant because you serve as a president, chief academic officer, or senior student development officer in one of the 58 colleges within the North Carolina Community College system. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Michael Coleman, a doctoral candidate in the School of Business at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to understand how transformational leaders inspire employee engagement in the rapidly changing environment found in the North Carolina Community College System.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following:

1. Participate in the 45- question multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ), hosted by Survey Monkey, to determine your leadership style. The survey should take no more than 15 minutes to complete. A link is provided below.
2. If selected to continue, you are asked to take part in a 60-minute interview via phone, skype, or face-to-face, with open-ended questions designed to collect narrative data about your experiences inspiring employee engagement while in your leadership position in a North Carolina Community College. The interview will be recorded so that I can be sure to accurately document your answers. After the interview, I will transcribe your responses and provide you with the written transcript to proofread before the data is analyzed and reported. The information you provide will be kept confidential.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study: The risks involved in this study are no more than the participant would encounter in everyday life.

There are no benefits to participating in this study.

Compensation: Participants in this study will not receive compensation.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report published, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. The researcher will refer to each individual interviewed through the use of pseudonyms instead of their names (P1, P2 for presidents; C1, C2 for chief academic officers; and S1, S2 for senior student development officers). No questions will be asked or recorded involving the name,

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
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7/17/2017 to 7/16/2018
Protocol # 2931.071717

college name, location, or any other information that could reveal the identity of the person being interviewed, or the college in which they are employed. The pseudonyms containing data for these codes will be in the researcher's digital field note book, which will be stored on a password protected laptop. Additionally, research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. The researcher will be the only one with access to the written documents, electronic files, and audio recordings associated with this study.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or the researcher. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Michael Coleman. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact Michael at 252-883-0569 or mwcoleman@liberty.com. You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. Jean Gordon, at jngordon@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Green Hall Suite 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Survey Link: To access the survey, please click [here](#). If the survey does not open automatically, please copy and paste the following link to your Internet browser's address bar. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ColemanLeadershipStudy>

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

By clicking on the link above and completing the online survey, you hereby consent to participate in this study. Additionally, by completing the survey, you give the researcher permission to audio record you should you take part in a follow-up interview, as part of this study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

Appendix C: Correspondence to Selected Participants for Interviews

Date:

Dear:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study, and for taking the time to complete the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). I am excited to inform you that, based on your high score in the transformational leadership style, you have been selected for a follow-up one-on-one interview. Your responses to the interview questions asked will assist me in understanding how transformational leaders, such as yourself, inspire employee engagement in the rapidly changing environment of the North Carolina Community College System. This is a qualitative, narrative inquiry study, which means all questions will be open ended, and formatted to help me understand the unique experiences you have encountered in your leadership position.

At your convenience, please provide me with a list of dates and time you are free to participate in a one hour interview. I can offer to meet you face-to-face, via telephone, GoToMeeting, or Skype.

Again, thank you for agreeing to participate thus far, and completing the qualifying survey. Your continued participation will be invaluable to my study. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at 252-883-0569 or via email at mwcoleman@liberty.edu.

Dates for Interview: _____

Michael W. Coleman
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University School of Business
mwcoleman@liberty.edu
252-883-0569

Appendix D: Permission to Reproduce MLQ 5X Survey

For use by Michael Coleman only. Received from Mind Garden, Inc. on July 19, 2017

**Permission for Michael Coleman to reproduce 51 copies
within one year of July 19, 2017**

<p>Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire™ Instrument (Leader and Rater Form) and Scoring Guide (Form 5X-Short)</p>

by Bruce Avolio and Bernard Bass

Published by Mind Garden, Inc.

info@mindgarden.com
www.mindgarden.com

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Appendix E: Permission to Use Copyright Material MLQ 5X Survey

For use by Michael Coleman only. Received from Mind Garden, Inc. on July 19, 2017



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To whom it may concern,

This letter is to grant permission for the above named person to use the following copyright material for his/her research:

Instrument: *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire*

Authors: *Bruce Avolio and Bernard Bass*

Copyright: *1995 by Bruce Avolio and Bernard Bass*

Five sample items from this instrument may be reproduced for inclusion in a proposal, thesis, or dissertation.

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Sincerely,

Robert Most
Mind Garden, Inc.
www.mindgarden.com

Appendix F: MLQ Sample Questions

For use by Michael Coleman only. Received from Mind Garden, Inc. on July 19, 2017

MLQ Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire™
Leader Form (5x-Short)

My Name: _____ Date: _____

Organization ID #: _____ Leader ID #: _____

This questionnaire is to describe your leadership style as you perceive it. Please answer all items on this answer sheet. If an item is irrelevant, or if you are unsure or do not know the answer, leave the answer blank.

Forty-five descriptive statements are listed on the following pages. Judge how frequently each statement fits you. The word “others” may mean your peers, clients, direct reports, supervisors, and/or all of these individuals.

SAMPLE

Use the following rating scale

Not at all	Once in a while	Sometimes	Fairly often	Frequently, if not always
0	1	2	3	4

1.	I provide others with assistance in exchange for their efforts.....	0	1	2	3	4
2.	I re-examine critical assumptions to question whether they are appropriate	0	1	2	3	4
3.	I fail to interfere until problems become serious	0	1	2	3	4
4.	I focus attention on irregularities, mistakes, exceptions, and deviations from standards	0	1	2	3	4
5.	I avoid getting involved when important issues arise	0	1	2	3	4

Appendix G: Interview Questions

1. What does it mean to be inspired?
2. Describe any rapid changes your institution has experienced in the past five years.
3. If rapid changes have been experienced, describe what impact they have had on the engagement of your employees.
4. In your opinion, what best motivates employees to engage in their work at your institution?
5. Describe your experience inspiring employees to engage in their work.
6. What resources have you utilized, either internally or externally, to improve employee performance?
7. Describe your experience being a role model for employees.
8. Describe a time where you increased one or more employees' self-esteem.
9. How do you encourage employee creativity and innovation?
10. How do you increase self-confidence in employees through the use of inspiration?
11. Describe any experience you have sharing your vision with employees in order to inspire them.
12. Have you perceived any challenges to inspiring your employees to engage in their work? If yes, what were some of the challenges inspiring your employees?
13. In what ways have you inspired or motivated employees to overcome the challenges?
14. Describe your efforts to develop employees' into future leaders.
15. Describe the response you have seen among employees based on your inspiring and development efforts?
16. How do you know you are successfully inspiring employees?
17. Explain any methods or ideas you have to inspire employee engagement in the future.

Appendix H: IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

July 17, 2017

Michael Coleman

IRB Approval 2931.071717: Understanding How Transformational Leaders Inspire Employee Engagement in Rapidly Changing Environments

Dear Michael Coleman,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

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