TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN COACHING

DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO

THE DWIGHT SCHAR COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

ASHLAND UNIVERSITY

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree

Doctor of Education in Leadership Studies

Jeffrey Lee Pharion, B.A, M.Ed.

ASHLAND UNIVERSITY

ASHLAND, OHIO

2014
A Dissertation

entitled

Transformational Leadership In Coaching

by

Jeffrey Lee Pharion

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree

Doctor of Education in Leadership Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Judy A. Alston, Ph. D., Committee Co-Chair</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Olive, Ph. D., Committee Co-Chair</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lance Kaltenbaugh, Ph. D., Committee Member</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy A. Alston, Ph. D., Chair, Department of Leadership Studies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda Billman, Ph. D., Acting Dean, Schar College of Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Moser, Ph. D., Interim Director, Graduate School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ashland University

August, 2014
Abstract

Coaching processes have changed over the years, as have the young people who play sports. Because the field of coaching is so dynamic in nature there will always be a need to explore ways to improve and modify coaching techniques. The study of transformational leadership in coaching is a subject that deserves further examination, as such inquiry has the potential for cultivating better coaching methods. Studying a transformational leader who is also a very successful coach will help in positively shaping coaching styles and habits. This investigation was a single qualitative case study where a successful coach was studied. Thirteen interviews were conducted with parents, former players, fellow coaches, and colleagues to get a well-rounded view of the kind of leadership characteristics and behaviors demonstrated by this individual. A focus group with seven current players was also conducted in order to capture the contemporary team and player perspective on this coach. All interviews and the focus group were recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions were then analyzed to reveal eight major themes and characteristics of the subject coach. The results showed that a successful coach should have passion, humility, a strong work ethic, a positive outlook, integrity, a presence with others, an empowering style, and be an over-all unique individual. The findings of this investigation present a framework for how to successfully coach and lead a team with a transformational leadership style. The field of coaching studies would benefit from further examination of this and other successful coaches who use similar styles of leadership in order to continue to develop positive and effective coaching traits.
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, most especially to my dear Wife and two adoring canines, but also to my Grandmother, Father, Mother, and Brother and two Sisters who have always supported me in all of my pursuits. Thank you and I love you very much!
Acknowledgments

I have many people to acknowledge here, but wish to be brief. I want to acknowledge my wife, Angela, for her love, patience and understanding over the last seven years. It is because of her and for her that this is completed. My sister-in-law, Mary, helped me out tremendously in making this dissertation come together. My committee, Dr. Alston, Dr. Olive and Dr. Kaltenbaugh gave me good guidance and advice throughout the process. Cohort X was always a phone call away, especially Bru, Mike, Kim, and Kristi. All of my assistant football coaches through the years (especially Mike Malloy, Bill Schmitz, Mike Reggie, Jason Ryan, Pearse O’Grady, Luke Anderson, Bob Smith, Carleton McGrady, Mike Lewandowski, and Walter Williams) have been instrumental in making this work out positively. Toni Koontz and Robert Miller from the St. Charles Holy Angels Library were great in their research assistance, as was Jan Marotta in the Ashland University Library. Sharon Smith did an excellent job of copy editing and formatting the document. My St. Charles family, including all the students, faculty, and staff, helped keep me positive and motivated. The administration at St. Charles: Dominic Cavello, James Lower, and Scott Pharion, made my seven years in the program go very smoothly. My teaching mentor, Ann Cobler, was always willing to lend an ear to any frustration. Finally, my grandmother, Jeanine Emrich, was loving, supportive, and positive, and helped keep my priorities in line. Thank you to all!
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus of the Study</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of Research and Research Question</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background of the Study</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher’s Lens</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of Literature</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformational Leadership</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Followership</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary and Conclusion</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Constructivism ................................................................. 44
Meaning-Making ............................................................... 45
Transformational Leadership ............................................. 46
Research Design ................................................................ 47
Research Questions .......................................................... 51
Participants ..................................................................... 52
Data Collection ................................................................ 54
Interviews ....................................................................... 56
Focus Groups .................................................................. 62
Book ............................................................................. 63
Data Analysis .................................................................. 64
Coding ........................................................................... 65
Trustworthiness ................................................................ 66
Triangulation .................................................................. 70
Member Checking ............................................................. 70
Summary ........................................................................ 71

IV.

Presentation of the Data ..................................................... 72
Background Information on the High School ....................... 72
Background Information on the Football Program .................. 73
Background Information on Coach A ................................... 74
Interview Participants ......................................................... 74
Fellow Teacher 1 (FT1) ....................................................... 75
Passion ........................................................................................................ 148
Humility ...................................................................................................... 153
Work Ethic .................................................................................................. 158
Positive ...................................................................................................... 162
Integrity ...................................................................................................... 168
Present ........................................................................................................ 172
Empowering ............................................................................................... 175
Unique ......................................................................................................... 179
Summary .................................................................................................... 182

VI.
Discussion of Findings and Conclusions .................................................. 184
Overview of Findings ................................................................................ 184
Relating the Themes to the Research Questions ..................................... 186
  Question 1—What are the Daily Practices of a Successful Football Coach? ......................................................... 187
  Question 2—How is This Successful Coach Perceived by His Peers? ................................................................. 187
  Question 3—What is the Espoused Vision of This Successful Football Coach and How Does He Communicate That Vision? ........................................................................................................ 188
  Question 4—How Does This Successful Coach Empower Others Toward That Vision? ................................................................. 189
Link to Theoretical Framework ................................................................ 189
  Constructivism ........................................................................................ 189
  Meaning-Making ..................................................................................... 190

ix
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transformational Leadership</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications to Practice</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Further Study</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher Reflections</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A. Interview Protocol</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B. Interview Protocol Continued</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C. Interview Protocol Continued</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D. Adult Consent Form</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E. Parental Consent Form</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“Young people can do great things” (Kyle & Hodermarsky, 1997, p. viii). These words were spoken by a coach who is considered to be one of the best and who was the subject of this study. Aside from the classroom teacher, the coach is one of the most influential positions affecting students’ lives. Coaches affect the lives of their student-athletes through the physical, mental, and social experiences they help to create for them. The coach is the “definer, provider, [and] deliverer of sport experience for the athlete” (McGuire, 1992, p. 12). Coaches also need to be able to use and project positive skills and attributes. Coaches who do not refine these leadership skills struggle when problems arise.

Coaches face several issues and problems daily. The role of the coach is not limited to the athletic concerns of team members. A coach is also involved in an athlete’s personal, academic, and behavioral concerns. A coach needs to communicate openly with parents, boosters, and the school. A coach is also responsible for creating and adhering to the budget of the team. These challenges make coaching a demanding and complex occupation. The manner in which a particular head coach handled these challenges and led the organization was at the core of this study. In both coaching and teaching, a successful coach uses a style of leadership that is not only effective, but long-lasting and inspires young people to do great things.
Focus of the Study

This study analyzed one of the top coaches in high school football and closely examined his choice of leadership style. The coach in this study was viewed as the best at his craft for a number of reasons:

- He has run a very efficient and successful program for nearly 30 years.
- He has been named state coach of the year twice (1988, 1989).
- He has been named national coach of the year twice (1989, 1993).
- He was recently the only high school coach asked to attend a national panel (run by the NFL, 2013) on the handling of concussions in football (Wikipedia, 2013).

The purpose of this study was to discover the actions and behaviors that have enabled this coach to achieve such success. Coaching and managing a football team could be used as a metaphor for many other leadership roles, particularly teaching and mentoring. Chelladurai (2009) wrote that coaching was very similar to mentoring, which was in turn close to teaching, and that coaches could use classroom teaching to help players learn a task. The tasks of teaching, listening, organizing, disciplining, and all other tasks involved in-group dynamics were studied when looking at the leadership style of this football coach.
Statement of the Problem

Leadership has been studied thoroughly for many years. Burns (1978) discussed the ideas of transactional and transformational leadership. Transactional leadership allows leaders to accomplish organizational goals without elevating the motives of followers. Burns (1978) wrote that it does so by giving incentives to the followers to achieve goals. The followers are not necessarily inspired internally but given external factors that may help them want to be successful. Transformational leadership is a style where internally motivating the followers was done through focusing on the higher-order needs of purpose, values, and morality of the followers (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Yukl, 1998). This motivation did not come from negotiations necessarily. It was a follower driven and follower inspired leadership style. Burns (1978) also discussed the idea of transformational leadership as a moral exercise that raised the standard of human conduct. Transformational leadership was thought to result in higher group performance than transactional leadership (Bass, 2000).

Football has a history of coercive power, where the coach has the ability to control others through the fear of punishment or the loss of something they value (Hughes, Ginnett, & Curphy, 2006). Coaches such as Vince Lombardi of the Green Bay Packers and Woody Hayes of The Ohio State University used coercive power to run their football programs. In football, this punishment could be extra wind sprints, “up–downs,” where the players chop their feet and hit the ground upon hearing that coach’s whistle, or maybe losing a privilege, like helmet decorations. However, in the last 15 years, I have seen many coaches begin to implement practices that empower their athletes and assistant
coaches to take responsibility in the running of the team. Examples of this empowerment are allowing assistant coaches to run practices or be a part in some of the major decisions of the team. Players could be empowered by their inclusion into certain decisions that affect the team: uniform decisions, disciplinary decisions, and maybe play-calling decisions. In doing so, these coaches have become transformational leaders. But what is the best way to lead a football team? Most people analyzing football only look at the result, wins, and losses. This is a very limited viewpoint; rather, coaching should be analyzed by the overall growth and development of the athletes, especially when dealing with high school athletes and younger children. The lessons that could be taught and the lessons that these athletes would gain would greatly affect their futures. Successful transformational leaders allow a very wide space for this growth. Coaching is a profession that needs to continue to progress towards a better leader or follower relationship where the coach uses more empowering leadership techniques that are transformational in nature.

**Purpose of Research and Research Question**

The purpose of this research was to find the best practices of an outstanding coach and teacher in order to determine the required actions and behaviors that led to success. The main research question was, “What are the qualities of a transformational leader who has great success in coaching?” The term *success* was defined as a high-level of achievement on and off the football field. Achievement for this study meant positive results as it referred to student-athletes. To have a high level of achievement, student-athletes should show daily progress. That meant modest levels of improvement by
student athletes on the football field, which meant the student athletes would improve in their skills to perform the tasks necessary to win games. The coach’s success was determined by this improvement. The sub-questions for this research were as follows:

- What are the daily practices of a successful football coach?
- How is this successful coach perceived by his peers?
- What is the espoused vision of this successful football coach and how does he communicate that vision?
- How does this successful coach empower others toward that vision?

Leadership style was a critical element of the research project. Kouzes and Posner (2007) suggested that leadership was about creating a way to contribute and to make something extraordinary happen. Additionally, they noted in order to make something happen that was truly extra-ordinary, the leader must have certain qualities. These qualities should be positive. Larson (2009) wrote that the transformational leader combined morals and virtue with a desire to contribute to a collective intent toward real, positive social change. This would make these morals and virtues transferable to the student-athletes whom they coach. The best way to demonstrate morals and virtues is through strong ethical behavior. The idea of ethical behavior was directly related to leadership in organizations (Sagnak, 2010). Positive leaders with strong ethical behavior, high morals and sound virtues demonstrate their wisdom and show their knowledge while reinforcing behaviors correcting mistakes and motivating actions of success (Welsh, 2010).
Background of the Study

As shown in the “Focus of the Study” section, the subject of this study is an extraordinary coach. He is highly respected in the field of coaching. He has done his part in changing the culture of the school, instituting pride in everything they do, especially the football program, and he has brought discipline to the program. All the while this coach has behaved very professionally, which is very important in transformational leadership.

As coaches’ rules changed slightly from year to year, such as certification requirements and injury response preparation, the factor that consistently changed was the make-up of the team. The followers, or student-athletes, changed each season. Holmes, McNeil, and Adorna (2010) wrote that the follower holds a very important role in the leadership (both formally and informally) of an organization. The manner in which a leader affected these followers would determine his or her success. A transformational leadership model should enable the leader to create more leaders (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Gould and Voelker (2012) noted that youth leadership development required intentional efforts by their coaches.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study stems from the discovery of how this successful coach affected his followers in ways that enabled the entire organization to become very successful and allowed a grand tradition of success to be established that would carry forward and transcend time. This study holds significance in at least two ways: first, the study may help other coaches, especially football coaches, establish better daily habits
and activities in dealing with their teams, it could also improve their leadership ability.

Second, in reviewing the literature, I found there were gaps in the study of coaching. There have been studies on the organizational tasks and knowledge of “high-performing” coaches (Côté & Salmela, 1996; Côté, Salmela, & Russell, 1995); studies on effective behaviors and philosophical beliefs of coaches (Collins, Gould, Lauer, & Chung, 2009; Côté & Sedgwick, 2003); even studies on the common elements of expert coaches and developmental profiles of successful coaches (Gilbert, Lichtenwaldt, Gilbert, Zelezny, & Côté, 2009; Vallee & Bloom, 2005), but there have been no direct studies connecting transformational leadership and coaching, especially football coaching. This study examines a highly successful coach, who uses transformational leadership to lead his team. In studying this coach, I learned that the transformational leadership style is very effective in creating a successful program.

**Methodology**

The method used in capturing data for this study was a single qualitative case study. This single case study research method was a derivation of several researchers’ studies (Creswell, 2007; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). This study involved 13 interviews and one focus group with people surrounding the main focal subject of the dissertation, plus two interviews with the focal subject himself to establish an understanding of the leadership characteristics of this successful coach. Welsh (2010) wrote that an improved understanding of these leadership characteristics would help reduce the likelihood of failure from an organizational perspective and it might also increase the motivational success of associates, players, and assistant coaches. Learning
more about the personal characteristics of the transformational coach added to the pre-existing literature on this topic. Using a single case study format enabled me to expand dialogue with the subject, acquire information about the subject from others involved, and gain firsthand knowledge as to the impactful nature of this person’s leadership style.

**Researcher’s Lens**

My personal background has led me to have a great desire to better understand this subject. I went into coaching in 1998 and immediately fell in love with the relationships with players and coaches that coaching fosters. I have enjoyed the last 16 seasons of learning how to take what I know about football and use it to teach young men how to become better at the sport, and how to win. For the last 14 years, I have been teaching in school full-time and this has even more fully developed the relationship a coach can have with his players: I have seen them daily, I have been able to interact with them in more than one environment, and I have learned how to use that interaction to train them in winning football. I have continually had an internal desire to better my ability to coach, and when the idea of interacting with and analyzing the subject of this study to find out how he leads his team and why he is so successful seemed possible, I jumped at the chance. I have been a head football coach in high school for the last five seasons, and getting the chance to learn first-hand how this particular coach leads his team seemed like the best on-the-job-training there could possibly be. I have not had any other interaction with this person before this study, I simply knew of his reputation and record. I was excited to have the chance to study him.
My perception of this coach was that he led in a very personal and empowering way. Every clinic talk I heard him give was warm and personal, and he was more than willing to take the extra time to further explain any point to any person. Even the way he responded to me asking him to participate in this project showed the kind of leader he is. I simply explained the idea and the concept to him and he suggested I read his book (which he sent free of charge) and then said he would do it. In reading his book, it only took me looking at some of the title headings to realize I was on to something: “Enthusiasm,” “Pride,” “Commitment,” and “Leadership.” These words and how they were described in the book showed a man who was all about leadership in a form that matched the transformational pattern.

Transformational leadership was also critical to my interest in this study. I firmly believed that using a transformational leadership style was the only way to lead an organization like a football program. One could not simply coerce players into doing what one wanted. In my opinion, student-athletes needed to be intrinsically motivated. Truly successful coaches needed to be able to find ways to inspire each and every athlete. I anticipated finding not only transformational leadership methods being used by this coach but also intrinsically motivated student-athletes who have a deep desire for success. This infused a lot of bias into the study. However, the evidence that this coach was a transformational leader came through from his personality and the data. The actions and behaviors that were shown by the data of this project are very transformational in nature. As discussed in Chapter II, a transformational leader does
many things and has many attributes that make him transformational. A few of these attributes are as follows:

- He stimulates and inspires his followers to achieve great outcomes (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This coach has been inspiring his team for 30 plus years and has won 11 state championships.
- He helps his followers develop their own leadership skills. Many of his players and assistants have moved on to great things in life.
- He addresses the followers’ sense of “self-worth” to engage the followers in true commitment. Not one interview participant had negative things to say about this coach, and all seemed to be members of the team “for life.”
- He develops relationships and focuses on said relationships rather than results. Bass (1985) called this individualized consideration, and the educator coach who is the focus of this study has spent his entire career developing relationships, as is shown in the data in Chapter IV.
- He empowers his fellow coaches, teachers, administrators, students, and especially players to achieve more through highly enthusiastic leadership and also his high moral standards. This empowerment is also achieved through his choosing not to micromanage, but rather entrusting others to complete the task at hand.
- He creates and shares a vision with his entire organization. He makes daily team practice goals, weekly game goals, and season goals, which they all work hard to achieve.
• He uses intrinsic motivation, where all of the participants come to share the same vision and goals of this coach and work to achieve it because they want to, not because he said to. The players in the focus group were very motivated to make the upcoming season the best ever.

• This coach is transformational because of the high expectations he places on all who are around him (players, coaches, colleagues, and students). He holds all players to the same expectations that he puts on himself.

• He demonstrates ethical behavior. This coach has great moral fiber and exudes that through his leadership.

• Finally, this coach can be viewed as transformational because of the great love he shows, day in and day out, for the teaching and coaching he gives to all around him. He truly loves what he does and who he is doing it with and for. Most interview participants showed a great affection for this coach and said they felt the same back from him.

This study involved interviewing people surrounding the main subject. As in all studies of this nature, bias of the interviewer is present in the data (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). I worked to counteract this bias with several methods. I understood that presuming that this coach had a transformational leadership style would also mean bias in the study. I used methods to counteract this as well, which are discussed in more detail in Chapter III. First, the normal interviewer bias: Hancock and Algozzine (2006) stated that admitting this bias in the outset, which I have done here, would allow for an understanding of its presence and begin to alter its effects. Yin (2009) wrote that the researcher needed to be
“open to contrary findings” (p. 72). I was willing to accept whatever results came from this study and went into each interview with a clean slate, ready to receive whatever information the participant presented. Finally, I have referred to my bias in the research study and addressed this bias further in the methodology section by going over the qualitative research processes that were used in this study to lessen the effect of the bias. Things such as triangulation, member checking, and rich, thick description were used to show the results of this study, as opposed to my preconceptions.

**Summary**

Finding the best way to lead a football program, like any other organization, involved deep analysis of true experts in the field. It also involved looking specifically at one of the best and most successful high school football coaches in the country, to see how he leads. Examining his daily interactions has shown evidence of leadership. The research study was designed to bring out the kinds of attributes this coach had, which made him so great.

A single case study, qualitative research project was designed to look into one of the best, most highly regarded, and successful coach-educators in the country. A total of 13 of his colleagues, former players, parents in his program, and a building principal were interviewed to draw a vibrant picture of the man they called “Coach.” I had a great desire to conduct this process so that I could get a firsthand look, feel and experience as to how, why, and with what means this coach was such a success.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Among the several studies concerning coaching and leadership, a number of themes have been identified: including motivation and communication (Kassing & Pappas, 2006); instructional behavior (Patrick, Scrase, Ahmed, & Tombs, 2009); social identity (Kleine, Schultz-Kleine, & Brunswick, 2009); mental toughness (Gordon, 2007); and the difference between transformational and transactional leadership (Kezar & Eckel, 2008). In these selected studies, the coach is the central figure of the study, controlling almost all aspects of the relationship between himself and his followers. The behavior and efforts of the coaches are only a part of this relationship, however. While coaches have the ability to manipulate young people, this ability is limited. Participants, athletes, and students are more likely to find sustained success when they are internally motivated. According to Hardy, Jones, and Gould (1996), elite athletes must have high levels of intrinsic motivation in order to sustain effort through dips in form and confidence. What they are doing has to have meaning.

Transformational leadership is a process in which internal motivation is fundamental. This leadership style provided the basic framework of this dissertation. Another framework utilized here is from Drath and Palus (1994): *Leadership as meaning-making in a community of practice*. In this study, the authors discussed the idea that leadership is not an activity conducted solely by the leader, but rather that leadership comes from a group activity where all participants play a role in the leadership process.
An element that is missing from this literature is practical application. Although researchers have identified various examples of effective leadership, finding within these studies an example in which this effective leadership has been fully utilized to produce a successful outcome is somewhat absent. Perhaps this dearth of practical application demonstrating the successful results of effective leadership is due to the assumption of the researchers that good leadership automatically produces positive results. This study shows definitively that positive results come from good leadership, and that effective leadership comes from leaders who utilize the elements that make up transformational leadership.

This review of the literature is divided into the following subsections:

1. Leadership
2. Transformational Leadership
3. Followership
4. Relationships
5. Coaching

**Leadership**

In his seminal work on the subject of leadership, James MacGregor Burns (1978) posited that leadership could take on one of two forms: transactional or transformational. Bass (2000) expanded on this research by proposing that transformational leadership results in much higher group performance than transactional leadership. For any leadership style to be effective, three essential components must be both positive and productive: the leader, the follower, and the relationship between the two.
Many researchers believe that all leadership theory begins with the “Great Man Theory.” This theory assumes that “great leaders are born, not made” (Hirsch, 2002). Cherry (2014) wrote that it seems as though the right man for the job naturally emerges and takes control of the situation. Similarly, Borgatta, Bales, and Couch (1954) concluded that, “the most effective group is the one which has the most adequate all-around leader (‘great man’).” Lincoln, Gandhi, and Caesar have helped to contribute to this notion of the “great man theory,” but time has shown this to be a flawed assumption. Stogdill (1975) wrote that theories on leadership have evolved from the situational school, in which the processes of the group outweighed the importance of the leader; and personalistic school, where the leader is important because the group is subservient to him. Stogdill (1975) further mentioned that a “recent development” in the theory of group achievement is that the level of achievement is determined by the leader behavior, group performance, and follower satisfaction.

Good leadership must be developed through education and experience, and leaders must use experiences to foster growth (Hughes et al., 2006). It is the active practice of leading that will truly facilitate positive leadership development. Kolb (1983) believed that people learn more from their experiences when they take time to think and reflect on them. To explain their thoughts on the journey a leader takes in order to gain knowledge and become a better leader, Hughes et al. (2006) created a “Spiral of Experience.” This “Spiral” starts when a leader has an experience and then spirals outward towards the action that will be a result of what was learned from the experience. They discussed how observation is a critical part of this spiral, or experience, and that the
main ingredient of observation is the leader’s perception. Because observation and one’s perception seem like effortless acts, it may be assumed that leaders will passively go through experiences and not learn from them. However, as Hughes et al. (2006) pointed out, individuals do not attend to all aspects of situations equally. Instead, people are selective in what parts of a leadership situation they focus on, or perceive. This is called a perceptual set. From this perception, leaders will create their own reality of the situation and the experience and will reflect on it as they have perceived it. From these reflections, Hughes et al. (2006) stated that the individual will arrive at attributions that serve to explain the behaviors and actions attended to. Based on these attributions, whether they are right or wrong, the individual will act, and it is these actions that define leadership.

Effective leaders must be able to adjust and grow from their experiences. An example of this would be adapting to new and diverse groups that one is leading. Helgesen (2012) wrote that leaders must weed through the complex dynamics of their followership and find ways to identify what is truly essential to the organization’s mission. Then they must develop ways to organize the followers in order to achieve this mission, all the while remaining flexible to the group’s diversity and needs. According to Maxwell (2013), “people do what people see” (p. 34). In other words, the followers will emulate the leader’s actions. If the leader is positive, the followers will also be positive. If the leader is negative, then so will the followers be negative. Maxwell went on to discuss three necessary elements that leaders must have to be effective: a passion for personal growth, a heart for people, and an ability to coach others to their potential.
Leadership also involves an individual’s ability to persuade his or her followers to work towards a common goal (Holmes et al., 2010). In order to accomplish this, the leader must possess and have an understanding of emotional intelligence, and must work towards group cohesiveness (Wang & Huang, 2009). A leader with strong emotional intelligence will comprehend that he or she cannot act alone in this leadership role. There should be a shared leadership responsibility, and it should be collective and democratic (Friedman, 2004). Additionally, according to Keller (2006), a leader is most successful when he or she has a great capacity for initiating structure. This structure includes assigning tasks and defining subordinate roles. A good leader should therefore be both task-oriented and people-oriented. Being task-oriented involves planning, organizing, problem solving, and informing. Being people-oriented includes motivating and inspiring, consulting and supporting (Yukl, 2002). In order for a coach to be an effective leader, these qualities must be present.

Leadership development is a critical element in improving the potential of individual leadership, and experience is the primary factor in learning to be an effective leader. McCall (2010) wrote that there are seven “sure bets” when it comes to experience affecting leadership: (a) leadership is learned from experience, (b) certain experiences matter more than others, (c) experiences are powerful because of the challenges they present, (d) different types of experiences teach different lessons, (e) jobs and assignments can be made more developmental, (f) people can get many of the experiences they need in spite of the obstacles, (g) learning takes place over time and is dynamic (McCall, 2010, pp. 3-5). According to McCall, however, even though
leadership development helps to improve leadership, this critical element is often ignored and not fully utilized. This omission constitutes another gap in the research that I hoped to advance with this study. It is my hope that studying the actions and character traits of this individual leader by identifying his personal experiences and daily habits, and by understanding how others perceive him and emulate his behavior as they work towards a shared vision, will contribute to the development of more effective leaders.

Vroom (1976) helped to create a model for leadership, which argued that a leader could adapt to meet the requirements of certain situations and could learn and evolve to not only improve his leadership style, but also develop new and diverse styles for every situation. Yukl (2012) described how leadership behaviors could be examined and broken down. Among the behaviors examined in this work were task-oriented behavior, which includes mentoring and problem solving; relations-oriented behavior, which involves developing and supporting, or empowering others; change-oriented behavior, which revolves around advocating and envisioning change, and encouraging innovation and collective learning; and finally, external leadership behavior, which includes networking and external monitoring. Each of these behaviors can be emulated, and the intention of Yukl’s study was to discover how many of these behaviors a particular subject exhibited, identifying characteristics of each leadership behavior.

In another study by Waldman, Balthazard, and Peterson (2011), the authors suggested that there may be ways to study the brains of successful leaders to learn how leadership skills are developed. Whereas my study did not endeavor to study brain activity, I chose instead to focus on the individual traits and attributes of this particularly
accomplished coach in order to understand his success as a leader. Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader (2003) have defined leadership traits as “relatively stable and coherent integrations of personal characteristics that foster a consistent pattern of leadership performance across a variety of group and organizational situations” (p. 104). The traits, or qualities, of this coach, materialized as the study was conducted through vigorous gleaning of the data from the research. I believe that the traits identified in this study should be further examined so as to better understand how this successful coach leads his program, and therefore allow others to emulate his behavior.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leaders, as defined by Bass and Riggio (2006), are leaders who stimulate and inspire followers to achieve great outcomes and also to develop their own leadership abilities. According to Avolio and Yammarino (2002), transformational leadership is important in each and every situation, and that in every sector of life the transformational leader must “address the follower’s sense of self-worth to engage the follower in true commitment and involvement in the effort at hand” (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 4). Bass and Riggio also explained that transformational leadership can be either directive (task-oriented) or participative (people-oriented) and that previous research suggesting that leadership was either one or the other did not apply to transformational leadership.

Transformational leadership has also been compared to transactional leadership. Distinguishing between transformational and transactional leadership is very important to this study. Transformational leadership is the process in which leaders raise their
associates to higher levels of morality and motivation. Transactional leadership, on the other hand, encompasses power in exchange theory, political theory and bureaucratic or structural theories of leadership, utilizing rewards and incentives (Kezar & Eckel, 2008). Some researchers have shown transformational leadership can positively augment transactional leadership and the outcomes of performance and satisfaction (Vecchio, Justin, & Pearce, 2008). Most theories of transformational leadership are conceptualized primarily at the dyadic level, meaning the major interest is to explain the leaders’ direct influence over the followers (Yukl, 1999). These theories do not discuss the leader’s influence over processes, however.

A tenet of transformational leadership theory is that a leader who focuses on relationships rather than results will generally achieve better outcomes. Bass (1985) referred to this concept as transformational leaders using individualized consideration, which allows a leader to play an especially important role in followers’ growth and development. This individual consideration permits the follower to have a sense of social identification because they feel pride in being a part of the group. Consequently, followers come to view their individual efforts and work roles as a contribution to a larger collective cause (Wang, Law, Hackett, Duanxu, & Zhen, 2005). Transformational leadership can lead to positive relationships, which will result in superior performance.

Empowerment also plays a fundamental role in transformational leadership. Leaders who wish to enhance employee satisfaction and organizational commitment should be able to communicate enthusiasm about objectives, foster the internalization of goals, create a sense of choice and impact, and thus make employees feel as though they
are full participants in transforming the organization (Barroso Castro, Villegas Perinan, &
Casillas Bueno, 2008). When students or athletes feel that they are full participants in
creating change, it enhances the overall culture of the group. There is a positive
relationship between the elements of commitment, motivation, satisfaction,
communication, and collaboration, and the effectiveness of the overall performance of
each participant involved (Sahin, 2004). According to Avolio, Welchun, and Koh
(2004), transformational leaders get followers involved through the vision that is created
and shared, and then psychologically empower and inspire them through enthusiasm and
high moral standards. This is the essence of transformational leadership.
Transformational leadership does not focus specifically on direct coordination, control, or
complete supervision. Transformational leadership seeks rather to build an
organization’s capacity to select its purposes and support the advancement of changes to
practices of teaching and learning through shared development (Hallinger, 2003). This
shared development can ultimately lead to self-managed work groups (Manz & Sims,
1987). It is this empowerment and autonomy that makes transformational leadership
effective. Through transformational leadership, athletes can become intrinsically
motivated, select to participate and work hard towards team goals because it pleases
them. As Charbonneau, Barling, and Kelloway (2001) noted, intrinsic motivation will
lead to enhanced sports performance. When the athletes are working hard because they
want to, greater success will be achieved.

Typically transformational leadership is measured in terms of three leadership
outcomes: the ability of the leader to generate extra effort on the part of those being led;
the subordinates’ perceptions of the leader’s effectiveness; and the subordinates’ satisfaction with the leader (Pounder, 2008). It was the goal of this study to seek these qualities and results in the leadership style of one of the most successful high school football coaches.

Avolio, Waldman, and Yammarino (1991) discussed the idea of how transformational leaders directed an organization’s vision, writing that transformational leaders helped followers change their concerns for existence and security to higher level concerns like achievement and growth. The authors discussed this by laying out the “Four I’s of Transformational Leadership:” individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence.

*Individualized consideration* involves the transformational leader paying attention to an individual follower’s needs rather than treating them all alike. In *intellectual stimulation*, the transformational leader helps the followers think about their old problems in a new way. This activity leads to the use of reasoning and evidence to solve problems, rather than hearsay. In doing this, the transformational leader is not only looking to stimulate the intelligence of his followers, but he is also looking to be stimulated intellectually by them in return. The third “I” posited by Avolio et al. (1991), *inspirational motivation*, emerges from the transformational leader’s past experiences, which have made him a person who is admired or respected. Inspirational motivation is also enhanced by the leader creating a shared vision that inspires all participants to achieve. Finally, *idealized influence* involves the transformational leader showing his followers that they can achieve goals that they may have previously thought impossible.
This kind of transformational leadership allows followers to attain the level of ability to be leaders themselves (Avolio et al., 1991, pp. 13-15).

According to Bolkan and Goodboy (2009), transformational leadership is related positively to student learning outcomes, student participation, and the perceptions of teacher credibility. Transformational leadership can also influence one’s creative self-efficacy. A person with a high confidence level in his creativity will, in the long run, be more effective and more productive (Gong, Huang, & Farh, 2009). Transformational leadership, therefore, plays a vital role in the creation of positive teacher and student, or coach and player interaction. This positive interaction relies on the satisfaction of the follower (student player) in his role under the leader (coach). Because transformational leadership impacts attitude, effort, performance, commitment, and behavior, it can therefore lead to satisfaction (Nguni, Sleegers, & Denessen, 2006).

The positive correlation between transformational leadership and performance outcomes demonstrates that the followers’ perceptions of the characteristics of their own work serves to mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and performance (Nielsen, Randall, Yarker, & Brenner, 2008). This relationship is developed through psychological empowerment, trust, collective efficacy, and the clarity of goals. It is further advanced when the leader encourages and supports the creative thinking of the follower. All of these aspects allow transformational leaders to motivate followers to transcend their self-interests for a collective purpose, vision, and mission. Leadership of this nature fosters trust and admiration toward the leader, and consequently the followers may be inspired to exceed expectations (Feinberg, Ostroff, & Burke, 2005).
The expectation of higher achievement that is a key outcome of transformational leadership can serve to aid in positive school transition, or football program transition. Variables such as transformational leaders, school culture and school structure all have a decisive influence on the transition of the school (Lam, 2002). Ultimately, the leadership qualities of all participants are in question when trying to create positive transition. A person in a position such as high school head football coach can influence the direct culture and success of his high school. Most coaches do this through a transactional leadership model. This dissertation shows that a transformational leader is far more effective in creating successful and enduring changes in school culture and environment.

A transformational leader has a softness, which represents an optimistic outlook. He is also striving for perfection, which indicates an achievement orientation as well as good coping skills (Frey, Kern, Snow, & Curlette, 2009). Van Eeden, Cilliers, and Van Deventer (2003) called a transformational leader a visionary with interpersonal abilities. According to Kearney (2008), theorists should pay closer attention to the age relations between transformational leaders and followers, because the age of the leader can also play a factor in performance. When the transformational leader is charismatic, however, age may not be as big a factor. Charismatic leaders appeal emotionally to the needs and feelings of followers. These individuals are interesting and lively, and possess a mastery of social skills. Additionally, charismatic leaders are sensitive and tuned into the social environment (Khatri, 2005). Charismatic leaders, especially transformational leaders, attempt to establish and communicate a clear vision for the subordinate (Godwin & Neck, 1998).
Ross and Gray (2006) wrote that there are three relationships that lead to positive outcomes: leadership and professional commitment, leadership and efficacy, and follower efficacy and commitment. It is important that this efficacy also be coupled with ethical behaviors. According to Sagnak (2010), ethical behavior needs to be directly linked to leadership and organization. Transformational leaders need to show both a great mastery of their skills and a perfect moral compass. These are all higher order needs, according to Eley and Adendorff (2011), who in their appraisal analysis of judgment choices revealed that transformational leaders appealed to morality, ethics, and feelings of group efficacy.

According to Bass and Steidmeier (1999), there are three pillars upon which ethics and leadership rests. The first pillar is the moral character of the leader. The second pillar is the legitimacy of ethical values embedded in the vision of the leader, which are either embraced or rejected by the followers. Finally, the third pillar is the morality and processes of social ethical choice and action that leaders and followers use in collective pursuit of their goals. Transformational leadership combines morals and virtue in order to contribute to a collective intent of real social change (Larson, 2009).

With all of his morality and virtue, a transformational leader still must possess the most important quality of all, love. Love is a more useful dimension than even altruism in organizations (Miller, 2006). A transformational leader should be receptive to the emotions of the followers. The transformational leader, being a loving, moralistic, ethical leader of great efficacy, should possess the ability to understand the feelings and emotions of his followers. This understanding on the part of the leader is critical to the success of the leader-follower relationship and the effectiveness of transformational
leadership. This understanding is called *emotional intelligence* (Rubin, Munz, & Bommer, 2005).

**Followership**

It is essential that transformational leaders be in tune with each of their followers. Marsh (2010) wrote that a “leader’s behaviors and attitudes are important to each team member in considering individual team member needs and goals” (p. 192). Only with this consideration can transformational leadership occur. Nielsen et al. (2008) proposed that three characteristics mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and the well-being of followers: increased role clarity, increased meaningfulness, and increased opportunities for development. Additionally, transformational leadership is most effective towards subordinates low on the organization based self-esteem chart because it provides innovation in a positive way to those people (Rank, Nelson, Allen, & Xu, 2009). When a person of low self-esteem is allowed free thought, they establish identity. Developing identity is a critical element of transformational leadership.

A transformational value offering, proposed by Kleine et al. (2009), evaluates weighted outcome beliefs in normative factors, but also the potentially more port and impact the offering will have on the identity of the person choosing it. This research identified reasons why people make decisions, and it identified a process to help people make decisions. This should involve a role; as an ideal schema, which involves a person’s vision; and identity schema, which captures the person’s perception of himself; and a factor of pride (Kleine et al., 2009). A positive transformational leader will influence their followers’ self-efficacy, which will affect their well-being (Nielsen &
Munir, 2009). If a follower has a positive self-identity, feels proficient in understanding all that he or she does, and possesses confidence (well-being), that person will be highly productive.

Followers are usually motivated through their psychological needs. These needs as deemed by Ryan and Deci are relatedness, competence, and integrity (as cited in Harre & Bullen, 2009). The followers need to know that they belong (relatedness), they need to understand what they are supposed to do (competence), and they need to know they’re doing it in the right way (integrity). All of these factors are provided through the leadership of the coach. If the coach holds the followers, the athletes, to a higher standard, then their expectations will be higher. If their expectations are higher because of the high level of the standards, then the entire culture of the program will be elevated (Bolkan & Goodboy, 2010). This result is captured in the term *efficacy*. Bandura (1997) defined efficacy as “an individual’s belief in their ability to organize and execute a specific task” (p. 320). The higher the level of individual efficacy, the more proficient a team will be. This will all be influenced and enhanced by the perceived efficacy of the entire team (Marcos, Miguel, Oliva, & Calvo, 2010). This is where teammates gain confidence because of their understanding of how to perform the required tasks to be successful, and acknowledgment of their teammates’ understanding of how to perform the required tasks as well. This entire process is facilitated, instilled, and orchestrated by the head coach. Robert E. Quinn, in an interview, discussed the idea of great teaching leading to this efficacy (understanding of how to perform tasks to be successful). He said teaching and leadership are the same process. Both teachers and leaders, especially great
ones, use human influence to impact others. He truly believed in the extraordinary, creative state, and desired for others to stop being more reactive and become more creative (as cited in Anding, 2005). The type of relationship between follower and leader found in this study fits Quinn’s description.

Bennis (2012) discussed the idea of dynamic followership. Although he stated that one rarely hears of followership development, he believed that it is critical to develop strong followers just as one would develop strong leaders. “The symbiotic and synergistic relationship between dynamic leaders and followers is the path to success” (p. 3). According to Deluga (1990), subordinates (followers) will react in the fashion that matches the leader they are dealing with. In other words, if a follower is being guided by a harsh leader, then they too will act harshly. If an individual is being led by a transformational leader, on the other hand, then their actions will be positive and softer in nature. This latter relationship will create stronger, more dynamic followers, who will also develop into better leaders in the future.

Positive interaction between followers and leaders makes it possible to create a change in culture. Schroeder (2007) discussed creating such a cultural change through a process in which coaches develop a core set of values specific to their teams. To instill these values in the team, coaches use several tactics, including identifying athletes who embrace these values, and punishing or rewarding players in accordance to the values.

According to Campbell and Sullivan (2005), coaching behavior can have a profound effect on athletes and their psychological behavior. They argued that the coaching efficacy was critical towards determining athlete behavior, which defines the
culture of most teams. When coaches are autocratic, athletes have lower effective learning (Martin, Rocca, Cayanus, & Weber, 2009). As transformational leadership demonstrates, coaches can be more positive and create a positive atmosphere around them. Bass and Riggio (2006) wrote that transformational leaders can build follower trust by being dedicated to the team, maintaining integrity, giving fair treatment to the followers and showing faith in them by empowering them to make decisions. Transformational leaders can build this trust and demonstrate their dedication through self-sacrificial behaviors (Conger & Kanungo, 1998; House & Shamir, 1993).

**Relationships**

Coaches must cultivate a multitude of relationships in order to run a successful program. The subject of this study has cultivated relationships with parents, teachers, coaches, and players. He has developed these individual relationships critical to the transformational process, by treating each person as an individual and empowering that person to higher achievement. This coach is charismatic in his transformational approach. Barbuto (1997) studied the concepts of both charismatic leaders and transformational leaders, and concluded that there was no clear distinction between the two. According to Barbuto, a leader must possess aspects of both charismatic and transformational leadership in order to convince followers to become a team and abandon the focus on self.

A leader’s job, in creating a team, includes both establishing a clear vision and developing strategies that will make that vision a reality (Jones, 2002). In developing such strategies, a leader might cultivate several positive characteristics as identified by
Gordon (2007), required of a coach and the team members in order to ensure success. These characteristics include “self-belief, concentration and focus, motivation, thriving on competition, resilience, handling pressure, positive attitude, quality preparation, goal setting, determination and perseverance, and commitment” (p. 275). All of these, if shared by the group as a whole, ultimately add up to form the mental toughness of a team. Furthermore, teamwork itself has also united high-performing people by focusing on the daily routines, sharing the commitment to each other and fostering open communication and team spirit (Gordon, 2007). It is also possible that things outside the mental aspects of sports can help to create team unity. Factors such as class standing, team record, funding, travel and accommodations, the makeup of the coaching staff, and the academic policy of the institution, could all affect team unity (Aghazadeh & Kyei, 2009). Nevertheless, the most effective way to create team unity and a positive environment is through the individual relationships developed by the coach.

The leadership qualities of the coach are clearly influential in guiding a team to high performance and great success; however, athletes also fulfill important formal and informal leadership roles (Holmes et al., 2010). In order to identify and access the potential leadership traits of team members, the coach must first gain the trust of each individual player. To do so, there must be opportunities for personal interactions between the leader and each member. The Leader-Member Exchange Theory, or LMX Theory, is based upon the premise that the type of relationship between a leader and the followers will determine how an organization will perform (Chen, 2010). This theory examines the relationships, as opposed to individuals such as a leader or a follower, and
observes the connections among the participants in an effort to determine effectiveness. In addition to this theory, a standardized method was developed to aid in the assessment of the coach and athlete relationship. The Student Athlete Relationship Instrument, or SARI, measures common themes confronted in these relationships. As predicted, when a coach acts negatively, the athletes respond negatively and when a coach acts positively the athletes respond positively (Donahue, Miller, Crammer, Cross, & Covassin, 2007). In early studies of coach and athlete relationships, most athletes did not perceive a positive relationship with their coach. In order for coaches to build a positive relationship with each player, trust must first be established.

According to Rotter, “the efficiency, adjustment, and even survival of any social group depends on the presence or absence of trust” (as cited in Shooter, Paisley & Sibthorp, 2010, p. 191). Additionally, Choy (2000) explained that when students trust teachers they feel secure and are more likely to approach them. As with teachers, if coaches can establish trust and approachability with players, they can create the bonding relationships that will help deliver success. These trusting relationships encourage greater team performance (Shooter et al., 2010). The necessity of trust goes beyond the player and coach relationship to include player to player relationships as well. Trust among teammates promotes trust between coach and teammates, and also serves to strengthen team cohesion, which all leads to determining team performance (Mach, Dolan, & Tzafrir, 2010). Ultimately, transformational leadership is a critical, influential element in the effort to cultivate trust.
The transformational leader must have attributes and exhibit behaviors that enhance the relationships he will create and maintain during his time as the leader of an organization. According to Bass (1985), there are three reasons why transformational leadership behaviors are likely to attain central positions, and influence people. First, transformational leaders are inspiring and motivating. Second, transformational leaders are intellectual and lead with intellectual stimulation. Third, individuals who are transformational leaders tend to be good performers themselves and promote influence by this efficacy (Bono & Anderson, 2005). Adding to this emphasis on the effects of leader behavior on individual relationships, Serpa (1999) wrote that the coach must concern himself with three conditions in which he must model the correct behavior to get the desired result from the relationship with the follower. The first condition is the situation, as the coach must demonstrate a positive attitude and outlook, regardless of the situation. Exhibiting this reaction will lead to the follower adapting the same behavioral response. The second condition put forth by Serpa deals with expectations. Based on the history of the specific athlete and coach relationship, the athlete will have expectations in certain situations. If the coach’s behavior is consistent with an athlete’s expectations, then this athlete’s behavioral response will be consistent and confident. The third behavioral condition stipulates that, in dealing with an athlete, the coach must be consistent and fair. According to Serpa’s analysis, without fairness, an athlete might react negatively to a coach’s behavior, creating tension and conflict in the relationship.

In all of these situations, the coach must serve as the consistent participant. It is the coach who determines the mood and reaction of the athlete. In studying the subject of
this research project, identifying the specific behaviors reflective of the three conditions identified by Serpa (1999) was part of the objective. Understanding what it truly means to be a successful coach was the goal.

**Coaching**

“And we decided as a staff, and I decided as a coach, that our purpose was going to be to help prepare men to live meaningful lives well beyond football” (Morgan, 2009, p. v).

All coaches, and in the case of this study, the head football coach, play a pivotal role in various team safety determinations, such as healthcare, player security, and team management (Guilmette, Malia, & McQuiggan, 2007). There is another manner in which a head coach might create a sense of security and well-being, and that is through altruism (Miller & Carpenter, 2009). When a coach is forthright and honest and truly puts his team, program, and community above himself, he is altruistic. It is an impressive quality for coaches to have, and the followers’ awareness of this selflessness produces an atmosphere of contentment and security.

A quality that is even more important than altruism is knowledge. Many years of work in practicing the craft of teaching or coaching (or both) leads to the development of a valuable foundation of expertise in the particular field of study or sport. There are many demands placed upon a coach on a daily basis, and in meeting these expectations, a coach’s knowledge and skill are inevitably refined (McCullick, Belcher, & Schempp, 2005). As observed in one coaching study, “like teachers, the coach’s job is to transmit and transform a collective body of knowledge and skills on a given subject in order to
help athletes acquire and use that knowledge in various situations” (Côté et al., 1995, pp. 65-66).

Beyond the transfer of knowledge, a coach’s challenge is to teach physical skills, as well as build character, instill integrity, and steer youngsters towards becoming confident, self-reliant adults (Horn, 1987; Martens, 1988). Furthermore, according to Kassing and Pappas (2006), championship caliber coaches must be able to balance criticism and encouragement, performance and enjoyment, and must use direct positive reinforcement and also physically challenge athletes. As all of these studies indicate, in order for a coach to maintain a successful position at the center of a team organization, this coach must possess a multitude of attributes.

Côté has spearheaded several studies examining the people’s perceptions of successful coaches as well as attributes exhibited by these coaches. For example, Côté and Salmela (1996) studied high performance gymnastic coaches and found that these coaches emphasized five crucial responsibilities or tasks that were of the highest importance to being successful. The first of these was working with parents, which involves the coach’s ability to not only inform the parent on the progress of the athlete, but also let the parents know about their expected role in the coaching process. The second task of the successful coach is to work closely with assistants. This allows the coach to share the training responsibilities. Third, the coach should help the athletes with their personal concerns. In this regard, Côté and Salmela believed that it is critical to success in coaching that a coach be supportive in all matters that affect the athlete’s mental and physical well-being, including academic and familial concerns. The fourth
responsible involves the necessity of a coach to be in control of an athlete’s training. The successful coach must have a handle on the training schedule required for the athletes to compete at their highest level during each season. Finally, the fifth and last identified by Côté and Salmela is that the coach should be in command of an athlete’s weight and personal health and well-being (pp. 251-257). Although weight management specifically may be more important in the sport of gymnastics than other sports, maintaining a healthy weight is generally conducive to being highly successful in most athletic competitions.

In another study performed by Côté (with Sedgwick, 2003), both coaches and athletes in the sport of rowing were the subjects. Interviews in this study revealed a set of seven coaching behaviors necessary for success, as perceived by both athletes and coaches:

1. Plan Proactively—Among the set of participants, it was considered very important that coaches not only plan, but execute their plans and make things happen.

2. Create a Positive Training Environment—Such an environment should foster the athletes’ desire to learn and train hard. It should be enthusiastic, structured, and competitive.

3. Facilitate Goal Setting—Participants in this study agreed that the coach should help the athlete find personal meaning in the goals to be set. Additionally, there should be an over-arching goal. Goal setting has been shown to serve as
a positive influence over the athletes’ psychological states like anxiety, confidence, and motivation (Burton, Naylor, & Holliday, 2001).

4. Building Athletes’ Confidence—The coach accomplishes this by exhibiting self-confidence, as well as showing confidence in the athlete’s abilities. Also important to this behavior set is the coach’s use of mental preparation strategies, and keeping a consistent attitude in training and competition.

5. Teach Skills Effectively—In order to improve athlete performance, coaches need to use various techniques: including questioning, praise, modeling, physical assistance, instruction and feedback.

6. Recognize Individual Differences—Participants in this study indicated that coaches must be able to recognize the different needs of each athlete and personalize the training and over-all coaching approach appropriately.

7. Establish a Positive Rapport with Each Athlete—The coach must be a champion of wisdom and understanding (Walton, 1992), and contribute to the human development of every athlete. According to this study, establishing a good rapport will allow that to happen (Côté & Sedgwick, 2003, pp. 68-74).

Transformational leadership behaviors coincide with many of the behavioral elements perceived in these two studies spearheaded by Côté. Similarly, the data collected through interviews with athletes, coaches, teachers, and parents for this research project identified many of the same effective behaviors.

Similar traits were also found in a study about key elements of expert coaches by Vallee and Bloom (2005). These researchers found four variables that influenced the
building of a successful program: the coach’s attributes, individual growth, organizational skills, and vision. The coaches’ attributes included the traits, personality, characteristics, and knowledge. The individual growth variable was comprised of the coach’s overall philosophy concerning personal development. Organizational skills involved the process through which the coaches put into place optimum training sessions and competition throughout the season (Bloom, 2002; Côté et al., 1995). And finally, the vision, which is a concept that will be often repeated and critically important to this project, pertains to the way in which coaches build their programs (Vallee & Bloom, 2005, pp. 190-191).

In another study, Jones and Spooner (2006) discussed the idea of coaching high achievers, which is similar to the subject of this study. The authors named five directives that were vital to coaching these high achievers:

1. Do Not Try to Be His or Her Friend—The relationship should remain professional and be based on mutual respect.
2. Find Out How You Can Add Value—Quickly—Use your time and the athletes’ time wisely and effectively.
3. Find the Right Pace—This is important to development and advancement in skill and position.
4. Be Flexible—This should be both in approach and content.
5. Be Challenging—Of course high achievers want to be challenged—daily (Jones & Spooner, 2006, pp. 45-46).

Since most teams contain at least one or two high achievers, these suggestions are useful for all coaches. As the head football coach of a private, college preparatory high school,
the subject of this study works with a number of high achievers. As this study has shown, he adheres to many of the directives identified by Jones and Spooner (2006).

The coaching philosophies of several high school football coaches were the subject of a study conducted by Collins et al. (2009). Interviews conducted with these coaches, all finalists for a national award, revealed three significant dimensions of development: football participation develops people, coaches develop people, and outside factors influence the development of people. The first dimension emphasizes the benefits of football participation on young people. Football provides an avenue for success. It provides a healthy release and quality experiences and is a positive tool for reflective growth. The second dimension of development examined the effect a coach has on his players. The coach must understand and also communicate his role in the organization. Additionally, the coach must place the emphasis on all other ingredients of the program: practice, winning, work ethic, and the like. Finally, the outside factors that influence the development of players were determined to be the facts that athletes are viewed as special, and athletes represent others such as their teammates, and their school. Also, as a coach you must work with outsiders from the team, such as parents and families (Collins et al., 2009, pp. 42–48). The findings of this study serve to reinforce Collins’ analysis, as each of these three dimensions is revealed to be present and fundamental.

Successful coaches, like the one studied here, are usually former athletes themselves. Gilbert, Côté, and Mallett (2009) stated that there is a significant correlation between the success of a coach and whether or not that individual spent time as an athlete in the sport that they coach. In many cases, however, these athletes who end up coaching
in their sport do not necessarily invest time in developing themselves as coaches (Gilbert et al., 2010). Such development is also critical to success in coaching.

Bill Walsh, considered one of the greatest NFL coaches ever, created a list of 12 habits (plus one) that he found to be important in the development of successful leaders. His list emulates the ideas he learned from Dr. Stephen Covey:

1. Be Yourself—You must be the best version of yourself you can be. Work within the framework of your personality and be authentic.
2. Be Committed to Excellence—At all times, in all ways, your focus must be on doing things at the highest possible level.
3. Be Positive—Teach and encourage individuals, do not criticize.
4. Be Prepared (Good Luck is a Product of Good Planning)—Work hard to get ready for expected situations. Plan and prepare for the unexpected.
5. Be Detail-Oriented—Organizational excellence evolves from the perfection of details relevant to performance and production.
6. Be Organized—You must think clearly with a disciplined mind, especially in regard to the most efficient and productive use of time and resources.
7. Be Accountable—If you make excuses, so will others around you.
8. Be Near-Sighted and Far-Sighted—Keep everything in perspective while concentrating on the task at hand.
9. Be Fair—Ethically sound values engender respect from those you lead and give your team strength and resilience.
10. Be Firm—Do not budge an inch on your core values, standards, and principles.

11. Be Flexible—Consistency is crucial, but you must be quick to adjust to new challenges that defy the old solutions.

12. Believe in Yourself—You cannot sell yourself to the team if you do not exude self-confidence.

(Plus one)—Be a Leader—Know where you are going and how you intend to get there. Take care of people! (Walsh, Jamison, & Walsh, 2009, pp. 84–86).

By following these habits, Coach Walsh had great success in the NFL, including three Super Bowl championships.

As Bryant (2003) observed,

"Winning football teams and winning traditions do not happen by accident. They must be built—and inspired—from the ground up by people who know precisely what they are doing, not only on the field, but on the administrative level." (p. 42)

Bryant went on to express that the guiding light for any program has to be the head coach. In describing the winningest high school football program in the country, Kennedy (1995) used the following words: “family values, community support, and academic integrity” (p. 52). Interestingly, Kennedy’s description has no mention of football skill or coaching. This is how the success comes, from not focusing on it. The subject of this research project has much of the same philosophy. In sharing his thoughts on how winning and losing are just part of the grand scheme that is the game of football, the coach at the center of this study remarked,
The game of football has the potential to teach so many valuable lessons to the student athlete . . . there are hundreds of small victories in a forty-eight minute football game that lead to the ultimate victory; adversely, there are hundreds of small failures during that forty-eight minute football game that lead to defeat.

(Kyle & Hodermarsky, 1997, pp. 99-100)

According to this highly successful coach, winning is not a right, but an earned blessing, and teams need to win with integrity that is reflected through hard work, commitment, and rule-following. This highly accomplished coach wants his players to focus on the mastery of their techniques, such as blocking and tackling, rather than focusing on winning or losing. “A good football team must learn to celebrate the moment now by directing themselves to the task at hand. I find that a very accurate concept, and one that should be coached in every sport” (Kyle & Hodermarsky, 1997, p. 103).

**Summary and Conclusion**

The review of the literature has demonstrated the numerous facets of leadership studied over the years. It has examined the ideas associated with transformational leadership and its evolution. The subject of this research study has been compared to many leadership theories, which were discussed, and they have shown him to be very transformational in nature. The role of the followers and their importance to the leadership styles has also been examined with this review. Additionally, the relationships between leaders and followers, so vital to the success of the organization, have been investigated to show the value of positive relations in leadership. Finally, coaching itself was examined to bring a clearer definition to what experts believe to be the best practices
and attributes of successful coaches. This research project serves to fill some of the gaps in the literature to further show what leads to successful coaching.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research study was conducted in order to better understand the leadership techniques of a highly successful educator and football coach. The methodology of the study is examined in this chapter, and is comprised of the following: theoretical framework, research design, research questions, participants, data collection, data analysis, and trustworthiness. As this analysis of the methodology shows, I put great care and thought into the development of a single case qualitative research study, which enabled me to analyze the coach and to identify core characteristics that have enabled him to be a successful leader.

The theoretical framework for this dissertation stems from three areas of study: constructivist theory (Bruner, 1987, 1990; Lincoln & Guba, 2013), meaning-making (Drath & Palus, 1994), and finally transformational leadership, which was shown to be present in the leadership methods of the subject (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Chelladurai, 2009). Following a discussion of the theoretical framework, a description of the research design was provided in this chapter, which includes a rationale for the qualitative approach used in this study (Creswell, 2007, 2008; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2010). Additionally, the works of case study experts were consulted in order to justify the use of a single case study process for this research endeavor (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Next, the research question and four sub-questions, designed to best analyze the subject as a leader, were reviewed. The process
of selecting participants through purposeful sampling was then discussed. The data collection portion of this chapter provides a review of the three forms of data utilized in this study: participant interviews, a focus group, and a personal document, which was a book on coaching written by the subject. Here I also described the method of gathering each form of data and explained the value of triangulation in validating the data collected (Hatch, 2002; Seidman, 2006; Weiss, 1994). Data analysis was then examined, in which I detailed the process of coding the data. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion of trustworthiness. Here I described how the scholarship in the field of qualitative research enabled me to clarify what made a trustworthy research design (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009; Shenton, 2004).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this dissertation stemmed from three areas of study: constructivist theory (Bruner, 1987, 1990; Lincoln & Guba, 2013); meaning-making (Drath & Palus, 1994); and transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Chelladurai, 2009).

Constructivism

Jerome Bruner’s constructivist theory incorporates many of the ideas from previous theorists like Piaget (2001) and Vygotsky (1978). Bruner (1987, 1990) suggested that development occurs as mental structures become more elaborate and sophisticated through interaction and experience. In describing the constructivist theory formed by Bruner, Kearsley (2001) discussed how learners construct ideas and concepts based on their current or past knowledge. The learner can select and transform
information, construct hypotheses, and make decisions relying on the cognitive structure. According to Lincoln and Guba (2013), “the methodology appropriate to constructivism must be the one that delves into the minds and meaning-making, sense-making activities of the several knowers involved” (p. 40). In this study the followers and associates of the coach were interviewed to discover how they constructed the reality of his leadership style. The coach was interviewed as well to determine how he constructed his reality into what it is today.

The focus of the study learned and “constructed” his own reality through his experiences as a student and a football player in high school and college. He learned from mentor teachers, coaches, and other team members how he would teach and coach in the future. His constructivism is shown through the data of this project. Similarly, the current players have been affected by this coach. They have been and continue to construct a view of who this coach is, and also who they are themselves. The players (and the high school community at large) has also constructed the reality of what their football program is and means to them because of their relationship with this coach.

**Meaning-Making**

Drath and Palus (1994) dissected the concept of “leadership as meaning-making in a community of practice.” First, they examined the idea of how people come to have the meaning of something: by the naming, and interpreting things, and making commitments to actions, and other people, and to values. According to Drath and Palus, a good leader who is trying to make something meaningful to his followers will emerge from his own private meanings and create new words and metaphors that will open up
these private names and values to the hearts of all others. The “community of practice” described by Drath and Palus (1994) involves a shared activity, which generates a shared knowledge. In such a community people are united by more than membership in a group. They are involved with one another in action (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Furthermore, Drath and Palus (1994) believed that meaning-making and community are co-constructive. As such, meaning constructs community, which in turn constructs meaning. Leaders in such an environment do not influence because they are leaders, nevertheless, influence is a consequence of leadership.

The leader at the center of this study represents the meaning-making described by Drath and Palus (1994). He has established, named, and interpreted what their football program is all about for the followers. He is completely committed to the players, coaches, and families of his program. He has great values and values the important things that help his team succeed. His actions show his commitment to the team and the values he wishes to share with all involved. He works tirelessly to achieve the goals he sets out for the program. It is the inspiration that is created by this coach that creates a “community of practice” where all of the players, coaches, and families involved work tirelessly towards a shared goal to be successful. It is not just the coach’s goals that are being attempted to be reached, it is the community’s.

**Transformational Leadership**

Transformational leaders are concerned with creating a new vision and order for the organization (Chelladurai, 2009). This type of leader articulates a vision, convinces the members of the viability of the vision, and expresses confidence in the followers’
capacity to achieve that vision. Transformational leaders arouse the members’ higher order needs, which in turn elevate the level of effort beyond expectations (Bass, 1985). This type of effort, then, creates higher performance outcomes. It is examining these outcomes, like state football championships, which allows the leader performance to be measured (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Likewise, transformational leadership can be associated with the positive performance of athletes (Charboneau et al., 2001). The subject of this research project reached his community with a clear vision that united his followers and helped them to construct a new reality, which was the unified goal of the entire football program. As the data presented in this study shows, the great success of this coach came from his leadership style. As stated in the “Researcher’s Lens” section of Chapter I, this educator coach has used factors of transformational leadership to achieve positive results throughout his career.

**Research Design**

This study was a single case qualitative research study (Merriam, 1988), as it investigated one subject: a highly successful coach. Merriam stated that the qualitative case study is a research design in its own right and can be distinguished from other approaches to a research problem. For example, the qualitative research method provides a way to closely study cause-and-effect relationships. Additionally, qualitative research takes a very interactive research approach, where the researcher must be flexible. A popular research methodology in the social sciences, qualitative research calls for the sidestepping of artificial and narrow experimental studies and promotes methods of inquiry that allow for more spontaneity (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). In interviewing
such a successful coach, the ability to be flexible and spontaneous was important because all the variables were not known to me beforehand, and needed to be explored. Creswell (2008) referred to the fluid nature of qualitative research, emphasizing that this process flows “from philosophical assumptions, to worldviews and through a theoretical lens, and on to the procedures involved in studying social or human problems.” As Creswell explained, qualitative researchers collect their data “in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study,” and analyze this data by identifying “established patterns or themes.” Furthermore, according to Creswell, this type of study should yield a final presentation in which the problem is fully described and interpreted, the voices of the participants are present, and the researcher is reflective. Creswell also pointed out that, ultimately, a true qualitative research study “extends the literature or signals a call for action” (Creswell, 2007, p. 37).

Similarly, the phases of qualitative research, as described by Weiss (1994), are overlapping and intermeshed. These phases include sampling, preparing for interviews, conducting interviews, analyzing the data, and writing the report. All of these phases were utilized in this research study.

According to Stake (1995), “case study is the study of a particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (p. xi). This study was, in particular, a single case study, studying one football coach and his leadership style. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) explained that qualitative research is useful in seeing multiple layers of socially constructed realities or qualities that are complex and indivisible into discrete variables. In this research project,
the phenomena being studied were the leadership qualities and styles of this highly successful football coach. As the researcher, I attempted to incorporate all of the variables through specific interview questions and a guided focus group.

This study followed the four characteristics of a case study as defined by Merriam (1988): particularistic, descriptive, heuristic, and inductive. The particularistic element of a case study focuses on the particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon. First, in this case, it was one coach and his leadership style. Second, the descriptive characteristic of a case study denotes that it is rich with description. Thus, I have provided intensive, detailed description of the habits, personality, and leadership qualities of this coach in this study. Third, heuristic indicates the analytical nature of the study that helps to illuminate or explain, in this case, the leadership style of this coach. Fourth, the inductive characteristic of a case study involves the researcher’s reliance on inductive reasoning. As such, I continually adjusted, adapted, and manipulated the data based on what was being learned throughout the process of this study. There is no standard format for case study research (Merriam, 1988). The researcher must therefore set his own standard of rhetorical structure. To do so, the researcher must be cognizant of the amount of description in the case study versus the amount of analysis and interpretation, or even assertions (Creswell, 2007). Additionally, the researcher must target the study by first having an understanding of the likely or preferred audience of the study, as well as the reporting formats he will use to conduct the study (Yin, 2009). This particular study could be called a single narrative study, as it is a story about a single situation (life, team, class, etc.). The researcher may augment the narrative with tabular as well as graphic and
pictorial displays (Yin, 2009). I considered several factors in my qualitative research design; including participant selection, gaining access, data collection, coding and analysis techniques, and attention to trustworthiness and ethics. The rationale behind making this a single case design stems from many factors. The first is that it is a critical case because this particular educator and football coach is very unique. His achievements include winning more than 300 games, 11 state championships, and two USA Today national championships. Therefore, not only is this a critical case but it is a unique case (Yin, 2009). This case study also fits Merriam’s (1988) definition of a historical case study, where the uniqueness of this coach is significant enough that it needed to be documented, interpreted, and explained in some fashion.

Qualitative data collection methods as well as interviewing facilitated an understanding of how this coach manipulates his environment. The richly complex descriptions that emerged from the interviews I conducted revealed how this coach approaches the daily issues, problems, and concerns of his job. Utilizing the qualitative methodology and case study design described in this chapter allowed me to present the data effectively to the reader. According to Yin (2009), there are two parts to the definition of a case study. The first part is that a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and within its real-life context. The second part is that the case study inquiry copes with a technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points; and therefore, relies on multiple sources of evidence and data needing to converge in a triangulation.
The purpose of this single case study research design was to isolate the characteristics and behaviors that comprise this particular coach’s leadership style, which are worthy of study because of his success (Yin, 1981). Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that case study research allows the researcher to put the information about the case being studied into a form that people could understand better. Therefore, this research project was put into single case study format to gather all of the factors that make this coach the type of leader that he is and does so in a fashion that allows the findings to be generalized to a broader audience. The style of leadership was brought out by the rich, thick descriptions made by the multiple interview participants through their anecdotes, prose, and other literary techniques used to describe the subject (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006).

**Research Questions**

Qualitative research questions are open-ended, evolve, and are non-directional. These questions state the purpose of this study in more specific terms; and they start with words such as “what” or “how,” rather than “why” (Creswell, 2007). The main question for this study was, “What are the qualities of a transformational leader who has great success in coaching?” In order to answer this question, an operational definition of the word *success* is necessary. Success, for the purposes of this study, is defined as a high-level of achievement on and off the football field and in the classroom. Achievement for this study means positive results as it refers to student-athletes. To have a high level of achievement, students should be progressing daily. Whether that means modest levels of improvement by grade or modest levels of improvement by achievement on the football field, success is defined by this continuous improvement.
In developing research questions for a qualitative study, Creswell (2007) suggested using sub-questions that he described as procedural. Because this project is of a biographical nature, Denzen (1989) recommended that research questions follow interpreter format and be formulated into a single statement beginning with what or how, not why, and start with personal history in building on other information. The sub-questions for this research project are just a few follow up inquiries, but were built upon as the research progressed. These questions are as follows:

- What are the daily practices of a successful football coach?
- How is this successful coach perceived by his peers?
- What is the espoused vision of this successful football coach and how does he communicate that vision?
- How does this successful coach empower others toward that vision?

These questions were chosen to gather valuable information about the subject. Emergent themes were identified from the interview transcriptions and coding procedure and an interview transcription of the focus group meeting. The process of triangulation was then used to validate the thematic findings (Creswell, 2008).

**Participants**

The participants of this study included 13 interviewees, 7 focus group members, and the subject himself. I used a purposeful sampling method to find the participants for this study. Additional information regarding the participants used for this study is provided in Chapter IV. Purposeful sampling involves the researcher selecting the individuals for the study because they “can purposefully inform an understanding of the
research problem and the central phenomenon of the study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). The individuals purposefully selected were the following: two former players, two coaches currently in the system, two other coaches in the school building, a principal of the school, two other teachers in the school building, three parents, one former player who resigned from the team, seven current players in a focus group, and the subject. I found that each participant made a unique contribution to my study. The two former players of this football coach had nostalgic views and were focused on the past. The two coaches who are currently in the system had insight to the subject’s behavior that others may not have; therefore, they were interviewed to identify new understandings. The two other coaches in the school building provide unique perspectives as they, like the subject, also are trying to achieve success. The principal’s perspective was interesting in that the power and influence of this football coach may actually exceed the principal’s power. The perspectives of the other teachers in the building were important with regard to the ability of this educator and football coach to maintain a positive teaching career while conducting such a high level football program. Getting perspective from three parents was instructive and helpful for the study, because parents always have different perspectives than coaches, teachers, and players. The young man who quit the team gave his perspective on the coach and his leadership style. Finally, the focus group with the 7 football players was a fun and highly spirited event. Overall, the processes involved in completing the interviews and focus group in this project were thorough, investigative, and enjoyable.
Data Collection

The data collection for this project was completed using three methods. The first was participant interviews, the second was a focus group, and the third was a personal document, which was a book on coaching written by the subject. The use of these three distinct elements was deliberate as it assured data triangulation (Creswell, 2008). Merriam (1988) stated that having multiple methods of data collection is a common aspect of qualitative study research.

Creswell (2007) wrote that the researcher “engages in a series of activities in the process of collecting data” (p. 118). He called this the data collection circle. Included in Creswell’s data collection circle are purposefully sampling; gaining access and making rapport with prospective respondents; locating the site or individual for interviewing; storing data, resolving field issues, recording information, and collecting data.

As discussed before, I purposefully sampled the participants, using criterion sampling (Creswell, 2007) for all respondents, stipulating that they must have had a relationship with the subject of the study. I also used random purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2007) to select parents and players from a senior player list. In this sampling, I skipped three names and picked the fourth one to make it random. I called the prospective parents on the phone and was successful in getting them to agree to meet for an interview after explaining who I was and what the interview was concerning. The players were also willing to come to the focus group, but a few had prior commitments and I had to go to the next randomly selected prospect until I had the final seven who participated in the focus group. Finally, I used what might be deemed an opportunistic
sample (Creswell, 2007) to get the coaches, teachers, former players, and the building principal. The subject of the study referred me to the principal, the assistant football coaches, and one former player. The principal helped me to set up interviews with the coaches of other sports, and the other building teachers. The other former player interview was very opportunistic in nature as he was the son of the athletic secretary, who was helping me with the player list and phone numbers.

I gained access almost immediately to the list of names as a result of the subject of the study requesting it for me. He (the subject) and the principal proved to be legitimate gatekeepers, as described by Seidman (2006). I found in my planning that once the subject’s name was mentioned, no matter the potential respondent, there was immediate cooperation. The principal not only assisted me in finding the people to interview, he scheduled the interview times for me and let me use his office to conduct the interviews. Furthermore, being that the interviews were about the subject, who is highly regarded, I was able to quickly establish rapport and credibility with all the respondents.

As I mentioned, thanks to the assistance of the principal, who provided his office to me, I did not need to secure a site for my interviews independently. When the principal needed to use his office, I was allowed to use a conference room, which was very conveniently located on the main floor of the school. About one-half of the interviews were conducted there, as was the focus group. In order to ensure that there was no loss of data, I used three different recording devices to record the interviews. The primary device was an app from Dragon Software, which allowed me to record the
interviews with my iPhone. I also had a digital recorder and an app that was used on my iPad. The Dragon recording device allowed me to create digital computer files immediately, which I was then able to easily send to a transcriber. Data from my study, interviews, and transcripts will be stored in a locked file cabinet for three years, after which I will destroy the data. I was fortunate also with my project in that there were little to no field issues to resolve. I had to change meeting locations twice, but both situations worked out and the interviews were completed.

As stated before, the data collected was in the form of 13 personal interviews and the focus group of 7 players. I also interviewed the subject of the study twice, and I read the book he wrote about coaching. The data were used to identify emerging themes that could be generalized into findings. Provided below is a description and analysis of the three forms of data I relied on in my study, including factors from the scholarship that I considered in choosing these researching approaches.

**Interviews**

Dexter (1970) wrote that person-to-person and group interviews, like the ones used in this study, should be “conversations with a purpose” (p. 136). According to Merriam (2009), interviewing is the best technique to use when the case study is intensive, meaning it is about one or just a few people. This study was a mix of semi-structured and informal interviews (Merriam, 2009). Semi-structured interviews involve a scenario in which an interviewer has generally structured questions, and the largest part of the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored (Merriam, 2009). The informal, or unstructured, interview is one in which there are open-ended questions,
providing for a more conversation-like environment. The goal of the informal interview is to “learn from the interview and formulate questions for later interviews” (Merriam, 2009, p. 89). In my study, I had a list of guiding questions, which I used to guide the interview. I then used some follow-up, open-ended questions, providing an ample amount of wait time for responses. This follow-up process allowed the respondent to flesh out the answer he or she was giving. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes to a little over an hour.

Creswell (2008) also recommended open-ended questions for one-on-one interviews and Seidman (2006) recommended follow-up questions for the interviewer to get answers clarified. The follow-up questions I used in my interviewing were generally unprepared, spur of the moment questions stemming from the responses I was getting at the time. For example, throughout the interviewing process, I took copious notes, which enabled me to pursue clarification or elaboration in the questioning, or to ask certain questions at a later interview. The open-ended questions for the 13 interviewees and of the focus group were as follows:

1. How long have you known the coach, and in what capacity?
2. Describe your typical interaction with him.
3. How would you define his leadership style?
4. What is a typical practice or class or meeting like when the coach is conducting it?
5. How does the coach make you feel about yourself?
6. How do you feel about him?
7. What is the coach’s “vision” (goal or dream)?

8. Do you share this vision? Why?

9. What words do you use to describe the coach?

10. Please feel free to say whatever you would like about the coach.

From these basic questions, many interviewees touched on interesting and new details about the coach. When this occurred, I would ask follow-up questions based on the responses of the interviewees. An example of such a follow-up was the question: “what is your best story about the coach?” This typically led to a revealing anecdote about the coach and his leadership style.

The set of questions prepared for the first interview with the subject were designed to begin to explore the characteristics of this individual who has had great successes and is considered by many to be the best coach in Ohio. These questions were intended to delve into the mind of the subject without him having much time to process his responses. The questions were:

1. What interested you and ultimately motivated you to become a teacher and a coach?

2. What about coaching, specifically football coaching, do you enjoy the most?

3. Describe the kind of teacher and coach you are.

4. How would you define your leadership style? What kind of leader are you?

5. Describe a typical football practice.

6. Do you create a vision for your team? What is it?
7. How do you get a unified vision and motivate all involved to work together towards it?

8. What would you want other people to know about your teaching and coaching philosophies?

9. What do you feel is important about your teaching and coaching philosophies?

10. What is the most essential element of coaching?

11. Any final thoughts?

The questions prepared for the second interview with the subject were designed to pursue a number of concepts and themes I perceived during the process of interviewing all of the other participants in my study, in which I was interested in hearing the coach’s thoughts. The questions asked of the subject in the second interview were as follows:

1. Tell me how to inspire someone.

2. What makes you change a plan (day to day, year to year), for what reasons would you alter what you do as a coach or teacher?

3. How do you get people to focus on fundamentals?

4. How do you help someone succeed?

5. What is the most important element to practice?

6. Please put your vision for your football program into one sentence.

7. What does virtue mean to you? Which virtue do you hold most dear?

8. How do you teach and coach accentuating the positive?

9. What are some of the methods by which you instill your work ethic into the program?
10. Any final thoughts?

Seidman (2006) wrote that, “Listening is the most important skill in interviewing” (p. 78). Heeding this advice, I was extremely patient in waiting for my respondents to finish their answers as I interviewed them. Furthermore, nearly all the questions I asked were open-ended, and I was also very careful to use the three levels of listening, as discussed by Seidman. The first level of listening simply involves the interviewer listening to what the person is saying. As such, I was very attentive to the respondent and paid close attention to what he or she was saying. The second level of listening refers to the interviewer listening to the inner voice (Steiner, 1978) of the respondent. This inner voice is distinct from the outer voice, where the respondent is aware of having a public audience. As Seidman (2006) explained, words like challenge and adventure are indicators of the outer voice because they show the respondent is answering towards the positive aspects of the situation. The interviewer ought to be keen to explore the inner voice; however, which involves the thoughtfulness of the respondent’s answer rather than solely superficial, positive aspects. The third level of listening, according to Seidman, is where the interviewer: “like a good classroom teacher—listens while remaining aware of the process as well as the substance” (p. 79) of the interview. Using these listening techniques in the interviews I conducted enabled me to maximize the informative possibilities of my respondent’s answers, while also staying on track to answer the underlying research questions. Additionally, I took notes during each interview to notate the things that the recorders would not: facial expressions, posture, and any other non-
verbal cue that would indicate the mood or feeling of the respondents during the interviews.

Making the questions open-ended, and abstaining from leading the respondent’s answering in any way, also allowed me to deal with the problem of my own bias. Also, Weiss (1994) recommended that interviewers can guard against bias by:

Establishing a research partnership in which the respondent understands that what we need is a full and accurate report, by obtaining detailed, concrete material rather than context-dependent generalizations, and by fashioning a substantive frame for our study that effectively captures the complexities of whatever it is we are studying. (p. 212)

With this in mind, I shared the questions for the interview with the respondents ahead of time and made them aware of the purpose of the study and my desire for quality, substantive information for my research project.

I purposefully followed a set process to conduct each interview, in order to have as much uniformity as possible during the collection of data. First, I would position the participants either across the table or diagonally from where I was seated. Then I would turn on all of the recording devices. I would then explain to the interviewee that all answers to the questions were optional and that the interview could be stopped at any time. Once the interviewee had agreed to those terms and signed the consent form, the interview would begin. I then asked each of my 10 prepared, open-ended, questions in order, filtering in any follow-up questions necessary based on the responses given. I was careful to always allow a large amount of wait time so that the interviewee could reflect
and come up with the best and most complete answer. During this process, I took copious notes of my own thoughts and reflections as well as some of the nuances of the interview. Upon the conclusion of each interview, I would thank the interviewee and end the session.

**Focus Groups**

Focus groups have long been a part of qualitative research and are defined as an interview on a topic with a group of people who have knowledge in the topic (Krueger, 2008; Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2006). I used this technique to interview seven senior football players at once in a relaxed setting. According to Hatch (2002), focus groups provide an excellent data source for the researcher to use for triangulation. Because I already had 13 personal interviews about this subject, the focus group gave me a way to verify that that information was trustworthy and accurate. The data from the individual interview and the focus group were used to identify emerging themes that could be generalized into findings. Hatch wrote that the interaction of the participants is critical to the focus group’s success. He also insisted that the interviewer must use the right amount of control to allow the participants the opportunity to interact, but prevent a free-for-all conversation in which the purpose of the focus group goes astray and the purpose of the interview is lost. The pre-determined, open-ended questions used with the focus group were the same questions used with the individual respondents, with the exception of the subject. I used the players’ responses to help craft a few spontaneous follow-up questions during the focus group as well. Once again, I allowed ample time for the responses and also allowed and encouraged participant interaction. At the same
time, however, I kept the focus group on track, ensuring the integrity of the questions as well as the quality of the responses. The focus group lasted about an hour and a half and it was recorded with the same device that the interviews were recorded, so the recording could be transcribed.

**Book**

A third form of data that was collected was the book that the subject wrote. This source outlined his philosophy of coaching and provided several examples and persona; anecdotes from the subject’s coaching career that demonstrated his leadership style and beliefs. This source is sometimes referred to in qualitative research as a “personal document,” because it was a “first-person narrative that describes an individual’s actions, experiences and beliefs” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 133). Merriam (2009) stated that “personal documents are a reliable source of data concerning a person’s attitudes, beliefs, and view of the world” (p. 143). I took three themes from this book that helped in the triangulation of the data. First, this coach believes that enthusiasm is one of the most, if not the most, important aspect of coaching, so much so that he put it as the first chapter of his book. Second, he believes in *preparation*, and from the preparation, great things can occur. The third thing I got from the book was that this coach deemphasized the outcome and focused his team on the idea of *daily improvement*. Because of this change of focus, he created a *shared vision of success* and that is the essence of transformational leadership. This book, with all of its personal insights to this coach’s daily and annual habits, helped in the triangulation of the data so as to secure the trustworthiness of my findings.
Data Analysis

As Merriam (1988) noted, “data collection and analysis is a simultaneous activity in qualitative research” (p. 119). The researcher must interact with the information throughout the investigative process. In a case study the research involves ongoing examination, interpretation of the data, and the researcher coming to tentative conclusions and refining the research questions, all throughout the study (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). Part of this interaction with the information involves reporting on the respondents. In any report on people, the researcher must understand that the writing will portray an attitude about the people (Weiss, 1994). In analyzing the data from this project, I looked at both the respondents and their responses while immersing myself in the data and trying to find common themes with regard to the leadership style of the subject.

The analytic strategy of the writer is critical. In order to not become stalled at the analytic stage, the researcher must have a plan. In analyzing data, tools must be used, but knowing what to look for is even more important. Of the analytic strategies described by Yin (2009), the one that seemed to fit this study best was the method in which the researcher relied on theoretical propositions. In this approach, the researcher relies on what led him to his case study. In this case, I was looking for transformational leadership in the subject’s leadership actions and habits; therefore, I looked for these characteristics in the data. Yin (2009) discussed a second analysis strategy in which the researcher develops a case description. In my study analysis, I used the data from the interviews and focus group to develop the description of the subject of the study.
Yin (2009) also proposed pattern matching as an analytical technique. This logic compares an empirically-based pattern with the predicted one. If these patterns coincide, the results can help the study and strengthen its trustworthiness. In this study, I took the data given and looked deeper to see if it matched what others were saying. I also matched it to transformational leadership. A fourth strategy from Yin is explanation building, which is a special type of pattern matching. The goal of this process is to analyze the case data by building an explanation of the case. Using this technique, I was able to build an explanation of the subject’s leadership style.

Coding

Merriam (2009) described coding as very simply assigning some kind of shorthand marking to designate a certain aspect of the data and put it into a particular group. Throughout the process of transcribing the interviews, I developed a list of repeated themes and character traits used to describe the coach who was subject of the study. At this point I did not concern myself with limiting the number of codes, but instead collected words and phrases that were used by the interviewees while also adding my own descriptive words and phrases formed by my impression of the responses provided by the participants. The resulting list included approximately 35 codes. I then reviewed each interview transcript using these terms as markers to identify excerpts from each interview transcript. Following the process of annotating the transcripts, I refined the list of coding terms by grouping related codes and categorizing them into eight overarching themes or character traits of the subject:

1. Passion (Motivating, Inspiring, Eloquent)
2. Humility (Spirituality, Mercy, Selfless)

3. Work Ethic (Organized, Structured, Professional Development, Preparedness, Adaptable)

4. Positive (Purpose, Good Example, Humorous)

5. Integrity (Consistent, Accountability, Honest, Fair)

6. Present (Focused, Calm, Reflective, Concerned, Caring)

7. Empowering (Trusting, Not a Micromanager)

8. Unique

Once I had identified these eight overarching codes, I created separate reports for each, collecting the relevant excerpts from each interview. These reports revealed the strength of each theme as I was then able to compare the prevalence of data for each theme. I then used the themes to go back to the research question and sub-questions and create a pattern match so that I could use the themes to describe the coach as the type of leader that the research discovered him to be.

**Trustworthiness**

A very important aspect of this project was establishing its trustworthiness. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the worth of a qualitative research study is dependent on its trustworthiness. In establishing trustworthiness, researchers must persuade their audiences that the “findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to” (p. 290).

According to Merriam (1988), findings need to be congruent with reality in order for a research study to be credible. In this study, I used several strategies throughout my
study to build credibility. One way I established credibility was through the use of the book written by the coach who was the main focus of the study. This source helped me to develop an early familiarity with the culture of the school and athletic department of which the subject is a part (Shenton, 2004). I also contributed to the credibility of my study by using a random purposeful sample in picking players and parents for the study. Because this sampling accounted for 10 of the 21 interview and focus group participants, it was a significant enough number to remove the total “hand-picking” of all respondents of the study, which in turn contributed to the credibility of the project. My use of triangulation was another method that improved the credibility of the project. This was done by looking at interview transcripts, which were compared to the focus group transcript, and then finally the coach’s book. There was also triangulation of the respondents. The differing viewpoints of teachers, parents, coaches, and players, as well as the principal, made for some offsetting information, which helped in the credibility of the project.

Other strategies used that contributed to the credibility of this research project were the use of consent forms with the respondents, which made them knowledgeable about the project and what was going to happen in the interview or the focus group. Also, prior to each interview (and the focus group), I informed each respondent that there was no obligation to complete the interview, and my only intention was to get the most accurate information possible to show what kind of leadership the subject of the research used. As Shenton (2004) stated, such tactics “help ensure honesty in informants” (p. 66). Another way that I built credibility into my research was by allowing all of the
respondents and focus group participants a chance to go over the transcript of their interviews and clarify any statements that they made. This method is referred to as member checking. Four of the 21 respondents responded with some changes, while the rest responded saying that the transcription was fine as it was. And finally, I established credibility in my project by using what Shenton (2004) called “thick description of the phenomena under scrutiny” (p. 69). In using a high level of description of the coach and his habits and interactions with all of his followers and colleagues, the data and the research project itself are made more credible.

Transferability, as described by Merriam (2009), “is concerned with the extent to which findings of one study can be applied to other situations” (p. 223). The rich descriptions of the coach and all of the data attained in this study are the best vehicle to establish transferability, as such descriptions will enable the reader to appreciate and understand the phenomena at hand, and apply it to their own situations (Shenton, 2004).

Florio-Ruane (1991) discussed how the investigator’s (researcher’s) observations are tied to the specific situation surrounding the study and therefore, research projects can be frozen in the time in which they occur. Consequently, qualitative research is difficult to repeat exactly, making dependability difficult to achieve. What makes dependability even more challenging for this particular single case study is that the perspectives of coaches (both their own and those around them) change from year to year, week to week, and even day to day. Factors such as winning and losing, for example, have an impact on such perspectives. According to Shenton (2004), however, even if the results cannot be replicated in such a study, it is possible to repeat the process with exactness. Therefore,
to raise the dependability of this research project, the details of the processes (methodology) within the study have been reported in detail. Shenton’s recommendations include describing the following three steps:

1. The research design and implementation—describing what was planned and executed on a strategic level;

2. The operational detail of data gathering—addressing the minutiae of what was done in the field;

3. A reflective appraisal of the project—evaluating the effectiveness of the process of inquiry undertaken (p. 72).

All of these steps were taken to ensure the dependability of this study.

Shenton (2004) also wrote that

The concept of confirmability is the qualitative investigator’s comparable concern to objectivity. Here steps must be taken to help ensure as far as possible that the work’s findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher. (p. 72)

Miles and Huberman (1994) thought a key criterion for the researcher to reach this confirmability was for him to admit his own predispositions. Because I am a current head high school football coach, I had bias as to what I expected from someone whom I considered the best. I fully admitted to myself, and here in this document, that I had bias in this process so that I was conscious of it throughout the process of the research.
**Triangulation**

In order to make this project trustworthy, triangulation was used in two ways. First, it was used among the interview transcriptions, the focus group transcript, and the coach’s book. These three differing sources of data produced a number of similar themes that helped me to develop a credible and trustworthy analysis of this very successful coach. The use of three sources allowed for the confirmability of the data from each. The second way I triangulated the data was by looking at the different perspectives of the types of respondents I had in the interviews. There were differing responses among the teachers, coaches, parents, and players who participated. Denzin (1978) used the same term to identify both of these types of triangulation: multiple sources of data. Having multiple sources of data to triangulate allowed for the trustworthiness of my study to be greatly amplified.

**Member Checking**

As stated earlier, I used the trustworthiness technique of member checking to create a more credible study. I emailed the transcripts to all the respondents and allowed them the opportunity to adjust any of the answers they made in our interviews. Four of the 21 participants sent me changes to make in the transcriptions, but most of those dealt with cleaning up their grammar, or correcting a spelling error that was made in the transcription. The other 17 respondents replied with an “all is OK” response. Having those who completed the interviews review their statements makes the study more trustworthy (Merriam, 2009).
Summary

In this chapter, I have described the methodology used for this study. I introduced the topic and discussed the research design, identifying the steps taken in my research study and the rationale for the design. I explained case study design, and introduced the research question and sub-questions for this dissertation. In this chapter on methodology, I have also discussed the theoretical frameworks used in this process and identified the participants and how they were secured. I have described how the interviews were conducted, the use of a focus group and all the data analysis that would follow. Finally, in this chapter I have discussed the importance of trustworthiness in the processes followed to complete this project, including data triangulation and member checking as ways to make the project more trustworthy. The research previous to this project was not complete in relating transformational leadership to coaching, especially in football coaching. In the following chapters, the research and data are presented in detail, and my findings are conferred.
CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

Presented in Chapter IV is some background information on the history and culture of the school in which the subject of this study teaches, as well as football program he coaches. From this point forward, the subject was referred to as “Coach A.” In this chapter, there was a profile of each interview participant, including the members of the focus group. In addition to these descriptions, interview questions were reviewed, and the process by which they were used to conduct the interviews. I also provided my reflections on the interview process. Following this was an overview of the results. This included a list of themes that were drawn from the data through the coding process. There was a brief description of each theme with an example from the data. A more detailed analysis of these themes was presented in Chapter V.

Chapter IV continued with a description of the focal person of the study, Coach A, followed by a description of the interviews with Coach A. As with the participant interviews, I presented examples from the interviews with Coach A of the themes identified. I then addressed how the data from the Coach A interviews correlated to the findings from the participants’ interviews and the focus group. Finally, in Chapter IV, I described how the data collected related to transformational leadership.

Background Information on the High School

Catholic High School (CHS) is located on the west side of a large metropolitan city in a historically poor area of town. CHS was built in the late 19th century, as
evidenced by the architecture featuring stone and brick frameworks, high archways, and steeples. A couple of interesting facts about the school were gleaned through the interview process. First, several participants mentioned that, on more than one occasion, the subject of relocating the school to a different area of town had been considered and rejected. On these occasions, a great majority of members of the school community had opposed such a move on the premise that the school would have a much greater opportunity to positively serve its community from its present home, rather than in a more affluent neighborhood. The emphasis on serving others in the community was found to be prevalent in the school mission as well as the philosophy of Coach A.

Second, in the early 1980s, CHS was on the verge of financial ruin. Closing the school was under consideration. This was about the same time Coach A took over the football program.

**Background Information on the Football Program**

According to many interview participants, before Coach A took over, the football program at CHS was not the highly successful one that now exists. The team was small for the school’s size, and the three years before Coach A got the job, annual records were average at best. At that time, CHS had never won a state championship in football. In the three years prior to Coach A becoming the head coach, the team had records of 5-4-1, 5-5, and 4-6. Since Coach A was hired as head coach, his program has developed into one of the most successful in the state of Ohio and even in the country. Since his promotion to head coach, CHS has never had a losing season and won its first state championship in football in his sixth year. Coach A has led CHS to more than 300

**Background Information on Coach A**

Coach A is one of the top high school football coaches in United States of America. The 63-year-old coach has been head coach at CHS since 1983. As mentioned, in those 30 seasons, he has won over 300 games and his team has captured 11 state championship titles. Coach A’s winning percentage is above 80% both in the regular season and in the playoffs. *USA Today* has twice named Coach A national coach of the year. Coach A is also a highly regarded English teacher at CHS. His entire teaching career has been with CHS, having begun teaching there in 1973. A 1969 graduate of CHS, Coach A also played football as a student for four years there. He went on to graduate from John Carroll University in 1973, where he also played football, but his career as a college athlete was cut short by a shoulder injury. Coach A is also the head track coach at CHS, winning one state championship in track in 2001. Additionally, he was the Head Coach of the United States’ junior national football team in 2009, leading that team to an undefeated season and an International Championship.

**Interview Participants**

Fourteen participants were chosen to be interviewed. They included the following: two fellow teachers, two assistant football coaches, three parents of current football players, a baseball coach, a basketball coach, two former players, an assistant
principal, a former player who had resigned from the team but was still in the school, and the subject of this study: Coach A.

**Fellow Teacher 1 (FT1)**

The first of the two teachers was a mathematics teacher who claimed to be much more than just colleagues with Coach A. This teacher said she and her husband were good friends with Coach A and his wife. The close relationship of these couples is evidenced by the fact that FT1 and her husband are godparents to one of Coach A’s daughters, and Coach A and his wife are godparents to the daughter of FT1 and her husband. The teacher’s husband had also been coaching with Coach A for many years. She used an endearing nickname for Coach A that many of the participants also used. She seemed to have a true affection for Coach A.

**Fellow Teacher 2 (FT2)**

The second teacher was not only a colleague of Coach A, but he was a former English student of his. He had graduated from Catholic High School in 1977. This teacher has been teaching nearly 30 years at CHS and works in the English department alongside Coach A.

**Assistant Football Coach 1 (AFC1)**

The first assistant football coach to be interviewed was the defensive coordinator. This coach not only was a fellow faculty member, but also coached track with Coach A. AFC1 has worked at CHS for 30 years and has coached with Coach A for 28 years.
**Assistant Football Coach 2 (AFC2)**

The second assistant football coach to be interviewed was the offensive coordinator. He was going into his 34th year as a Spanish teacher at the school. Prior to that, he was a teacher at another local Catholic high school for seven years. This coach said he had been offensive coordinator for CHS since Coach A became head coach. He also said that he had known him since they played football together in college, where he was a receiver and Coach A was a running back. AFC2 said he considered Coach A to be “like an older brother.”

**Parent 1 (P1)**

The first parent was actually interviewed along with her husband. Her son was a senior on the team. These two parents were very warm in their feelings towards Coach A. They brought a unique perspective, considering their son did not play very much, if at all. Regardless of the amount of participation their son had on the football team, they had very interesting and positive things to say about Coach A.

**Parent 2 (P2)**

The second parent interviewed was a mother of six boys, five of which had or were attending CHS, and four of whom played football for Coach A. Because of her lengthy involvement with the CHS football team, she brought a very unique perspective to the study. She spoke mostly about his reputation as a teacher and as a good Catholic man, and not as much about his coaching.
Parent 3 (P3)

The third parent interviewed was a dad who seemed to be very much impressed with Coach A, even calling him “legendary.” This parent attended high school at the cross-town rival of CHS. When his son was younger, he had been sending him to his alma mater’s sports camps and programs. When his son was nearing high school age, however, he brought him to CHS to take a look. P3 explained that it was because of how Coach A stressed academics that he and his son decided on attending CHS rather than his former high school. According to this parent, football was an afterthought in that decision-making process.

Baseball Coach (BBC)

The baseball coach interviewed has been teaching at Catholic High School for eight years and coaching baseball there for 15 years. He had previously taught in public school for seven years. He was the only fellow employee at the school that was interviewed who had worked there less than 20 years. As such, he did not have the lengthy, grassroots connection with Coach A that many of the other interviewees had and did not have the same relationship with him as others. This coach went to the rival Catholic high school where he had been coaching football for one year when a roommate of his encouraged him to come to CHS to coach baseball. BBC had the perspective of Coach A as a mentor in both teaching and coaching and said that he interacted with him daily.
Basketball Coach (BKC)

The basketball coach who was interviewed is a seasoned veteran of 32 years. He taught at CHS and was an administrator as well. BKC had coached both football and basketball for a couple of years, but decided to stop coaching football and focus on basketball. This coach had a lot of respect for Coach A, but also felt that Coach A had learned a bit from him in their interactions over the years. BKC seemed to have a firm grasp on the interactions that coaches have in between disciplines. He also gave an impression of cooperation and “sharing” of information with Coach A.

Former Player 1 (FP1)

The first former football player of Coach A was a young man who was about 10 years out of high school. He was engaged to be married and still lives in the same city. He had some very vivid memories of Coach A and his impact on him.

Former Player 2 (FP2)

The second former football player interviewed was 25 years out of high school. This person was a key player on Coach A’s first state championship team. He provided a unique insight to the study from a player’s perspective of Coach A’s early coaching days.

Assistant Principal (AP)

The assistant principal was extremely helpful, not only with participating in an interview, but also with aiding in the set-up of all of the interviews for my study. This man had a unique perspective of Coach A as he had him as a teacher and a coach, then worked alongside him as a colleague, ultimately becoming his superior.
**Player Who Left Team (PWLT)**

This young man quit the football team during the previous season. He was a role player on the JV team the year before and did not see a future in staying on the team. At the time of the interview, he was heading into his senior year. He found a new sport (rugby) that he liked more than football and wanted to focus on that. I wanted to interview him to see if his opinion of Coach A was different from those players who were still on the team.

**Focus Group**

The focus group was made up of seven seniors on the team with varied backgrounds. These student-athletes ranged from underprivileged minorities on a full-need scholarship to extremely wealthy. They were highly talented starters for the team and also players who may never see the field. Each member of the focus group brought his own perspective, not only of Coach A, but also of what it meant to be a CHS student and football player. The player profiles are as follows:

- **Player 1**—senior offensive lineman from a moderately wealthy family; a returning starter; a possible captain (they have not been named yet).
- **Player 2**—a senior offensive lineman from a middle income family; a role-player and hard worker.
- **Player 3**—a senior running back from a lower SES family; did not play football as a freshman, but Coach A encouraged him to try out his sophomore year; a potential captain.
• Player 4—a senior linebacker from a wealthy family; did not start the year before, but has a positive attitude.

• Player 5—a senior defensive back from a middle income family; has a chance to start this coming season.

• Player 6—a senior running back; from a middle income family; has not started or seen much playing time in previous years; loves football.

• Player 7—a senior wide receiver from a very wealthy family; a returning starter who has a chance to be a captain.

**Interview Questions**

The interview questions were designed to be open-ended to allow the participants room to insert in their own fashion. The questions for the 13 interviewees and of the focus group were listed in Chapter III.

From these basic questions, many intriguing concepts arose during the interviews. When this happened, I asked follow-up questions to further pursue these concepts. An example of this was the question: “What is your best Coach A story?” This led to more than one enlightening anecdote about Coach A and his leadership style.

**Interview Process**

I purposefully conducted all of the interviews using a similar process, so as to ensure uniformity in my study. First, I positioned the participants either across the table or diagonally from myself. Then I activated all of the recording devices, as I used multiple recording devices in case of the failure of one. I then explained to the interviewee that all answers to this interview were optional and that the interviewee could
stop at any time. Once the interviewee had agreed to those terms, the interview would begin. I asked each question in the same order as listed above, adding follow-up questions to suit the responses of the specific interviewee as necessary. I consistently allowed ample time for responses and resisted interjecting my own thoughts so as to allow each interviewee the chance to reflect and provide the most complete answer. During this process, I took ample notes of my thoughts and reflections and to capture any nuances of the interview. Upon the conclusion of the interview, I thanked the interviewee and ended the session.

**Reflections From the Researcher on the Interview Process**

I very much enjoyed the process of conducting the interviews, as it enabled me to immerse myself into an environment somewhat similar to my own. Like Coach A, I am the head coach of an all boys’ high school football program. This process also allowed me the opportunity to engage with individuals who have a true passion for both academics and football success, which I found very rewarding. I found that although there were clear themes that emerged from this process, each interview brought a new perspective on not only Coach A and his ability to lead but also the results of this leadership on them personally and collectively.

I particularly enjoyed the opportunity, in the focus group setting, to reflect with seven of the current players under Coach A. The genuine love these players showed towards their coach was impressive, but beyond that, the uniformity and unity of their team showed the cohesiveness that Coach A brought. From all of these interviews and
the focus group, I left with a renewed attitude of positivity towards teaching and coaching.

Overview of the Results

To give an overview of the results of this project, the themes that were drawn out of the data were discussed. The themes that emerged in the coding process were listed and I provided brief examples from the data. These themes were described in my analysis of the data in Chapter V. After listing the themes, Coach A was further described, his interviews were reviewed, and I discussed correlations to the themes from the other interviews. Finally, I applied these findings to transformational leadership.

Themes Drawn From the Results

The following themes and character traits used to describe Coach A were drawn from the data of the interviews:

1. Passion (Motivating, Inspiring, Eloquent)
2. Humility (Spirituality, Mercy, Selfless)
3. Work Ethic (Organized, Structured, Professional Development, Preparedness, Adaptable)
4. Positive (Purpose, Good Example, Humorous)
5. Integrity (Consistent, Accountability, Honest, Fair)
6. Present (Focused, Calm, Reflective, Concerned, Caring)
7. Empowering (Trusting, Not a Micromanager)
8. Unique
Passion. “To have long term success as a coach or in any position of leadership, you have to be obsessed in some way” (Pat Riley).

For this project, passion was defined as the intense love for a profession and the showing of that love through dedication and commitment to doing a great job consistently. Passion leads to the motivation of others who are followers of the passionate leader. Very closely related to the motivation of these followers is inspiration, which is also a direct result of the passion of the leader. The passion of Coach A is shown not only through his eloquence and his fiery speeches, which effectively motivate and inspire his team and the CHS community, but also through his daily actions and behavior.

Coach A is one of the most passionate coaches in football. Almost every interviewee used passion or a synonym of the word to describe him. Coach A’s passion is captured in the way in which he expresses himself, both verbally and non-verbally, and his great many actions geared towards his goal of bettering his players. AP offered his take on Coach A’s passion:

I just admire the man. I just keep wondering, it’s like the Energizer Bunny. It’s like how can you keep up not only what you are doing, but how you are doing it? You know that enthusiasm? You know, that’s what works for him. If he didn’t want to continue to do that, then maybe he would stop doing it. But he is still able to spring enthusiasm and creativity and interest in the boys and he just loves his work, you know? He loves his work in the classroom primarily. He loves his work with the guys outside of the classroom, and he has the respect of his
colleagues and of the students and of his players, so I think that helps keep him going, you know?

FP1 used an enlightening phrase to describe the very palpable and active nature of Coach A’s passion:

You can just tell from people sometimes that they have a charisma or a personality that other people just kind of react to. And I can tell you that just from the first conversation that I had with him in the eighth grade, . . . I am trying to think of the best way to describe it other than it is kind of like the exact opposite of apathetic. You know, he just really cares about things and his . . . you know, his intensity and passion towards football . . . towards literature . . . it just kind of rubs off on you. (Interviewer: I would say “the exact opposite of apathetic” is a good description.) Yeah. I mean, you define apathetic as not caring . . . just uncaring. He is the exact opposite. I mean, he cares about so many things . . . It’s not, “oh, I care.” But he does, you know? He goes to action with it and it is almost . . . a tangible action.

It was this “opposite of apathetic” demeanor that moved many of his colleagues, like FT1, who remarked that Coach A’s passion was evidenced by his enthusiasm.

“Enthusiasm. Whatever he is doing at that moment, he is trying to do his best. He is trying to excite the kids by his example . . . I think because HE gets excited about things.”

FT1 went on to describe how Coach A is passionate about more things than just teaching and football:
And that is how he is. I mean, he is just passionate about everything. Even, you know, if he has a political idea he wants to get across. We will be out to dinner and, you know, he will start waving the finger at you and you know he is getting passionate. “You know, I will tell ya. I will tell ya.” Everybody that knows him will tell you that he is going to give you . . . I mean, not the bad finger . . . just the pointy finger. Like, “okay now, I gotta tell you this.” And that’s how he is. He has a real passion and, you know, what I said about being present when you just talk to him, he puts himself in what he is doing.

That “pointy finger” inspires motivation in others, and builds their faith in Coach A as the leader. “Everything he does is working towards our wanted goal,” one player in the focus group remarked. “I mean, and it’s all to motivate you. Every action, everything he does, every command he gives, you listen like you’re on pins and needles because that’s how much faith you have in the guy.” The players in the focus group also discussed how Coach A motivated them to reach beyond what they wanted to do for that little extra something that would help them be successful. As one player stated, Coach A is a “smooth operator” in this regard:

He’s a smooth operator. Because there’s some days I just don’t even want to do anything. Like last year we were running thirty-fourty-thirties after a six hundred. And he’s getting us hyped up for the thirty-fourty-thirty and I know I don’t want to run this, you know? Half of us passed out and dehydrated, you know? Headaches. Don’t remember what the date is. And he’s like, ‘we’re going to run these extra three thirty-fourty-thirties!’ And I’m like, ‘yeah, we’re gonna run ‘em!’
You know, he’s like persuasive. He can make you, like, run through a brick wall. Just, you’ll do it, you know?

The players explained not only their awe, but their gratitude for Coach A’s ability to inspire them with his words and actions. As one player stated,

I mean, there’s so many great things to say about Coach A, but once he shows you that if you put your mind to something, you can achieve something very great and it just makes you feel like, wow, this guys a legend and I am blessed to be able to be coached under this man. And I feel inspired and . . . I don’t know, I’m lucky.”

Much of this inspiration came from Coach A’s legendary speeches and interactions with the team, as AFC2 explained:

I’ll tell you what, he gives the most unbelievable pregame speeches. I’ll never forget before one of the state championships, he used a speech from Richard III, . . . Jesus criminy . . . are you kidding me? You know, I was ready to play. He does a lot of that kind of stuff that just makes you, as an adult, say geez, where does he get this stuff from?

There are few coaches who will pull out Shakespeare to motivate and inspire a team to victory. Even his fellow teachers have great respect for his eloquence and motivational speaking, like FT2, who stated:

At the beginning of the year, we always have a Mass of the Holy Spirit down at Saint John’s Cathedral to start off the year. And then we always have our first rally. And he gives a talk at those rallies and he ties in what we just heard at mass
and it’s just very impressive. I could listen to him all day. He’s a great role model for the students and faculty.

Another teacher commented on the uniqueness of Coach A’s eloquence:

We have a lot of wonderful coaches here. They are all great. But somehow everyone else sounds boring compared to (Coach A). I mean, it is just the way he says things. And he always ties his faith into everything, which is incredible. I mean, he rarely gives a talk where faith and what we are all about here doesn’t come into it. That is probably a big factor in his success because he is not ever just coaching football. He is tying whatever he does into the bigger mission of the school.

The players in the focus group were even more impressed with his ability to inspire with words:

I’m not sure there’s a quote, except it’s like one of Coach A’s greatest speeches ever. He was, like, referring to the student section in one of the games . . . so many people come out. He was just saying how, like, God doesn’t give some students here the size, the speed, or the athletic ability, but they’re here for you. You take this game and give something back to those people.

Throughout each of these excerpts from the data, Coach A was shown to be a leader with great passion. His passionate spirit coupled with his love for his school and his team motivates and inspires those around him to want to be better, and do better. His great eloquence is a tool he uses to display his passion, and motivate and inspire others.
Humility. “A good leader is a person who takes a little more than his share of the blame and a little less than his share of the credit” (John Maxwell).

For the purpose of this study, humility was defined as being a humble, giving, and spiritual person. Coach A has been described as humble by many of his co-workers, assistant coaches, parents, and players. The data from this study revealed similar comments from the participants on how Coach A’s humility is directly connected to his spirituality, his faith, and his selflessness; and is a mark of his leadership. FT1 had this to say:

You know, all the years my husband coached with him on the varsity level, any time they won and (Coach A) had an interview, the first thing he would get in the interview was, “well you know, I’ve got to give credit to my offensive coordinator,” or my . . . defensive line coach or whatever. He is always trying to give everyone else credit. And when you think about what a leader does, that is what you want to do.

One parent (P1) was impressed with the humble way in which Coach A would always introduce himself, saying,

He, first of all, introduces himself as an English teacher, “and what I do for extracurricular is I’m a football coach. And that’s exactly what I expect of your son. I expect academics to come first, faith, and then the sport.”

For a coach who has won 300 games and 11 state championships to introduce himself in this fashion, and make a statement about his academic expectations like that, demonstrates a remarkable humility, strong faith, and great priorities.
AFC1 said the following about Coach A’s humility as it related to his desire to perform to the best of his ability in all things:

I think the biggest thing is what his whole life is like . . . being the best that you can be. At the same time, though, in the context, it’s not about being better than anyone. It’s just being as best as you can be and whatever happens as a result of that is what happens. He doesn’t brag about his accomplishments or look back. I think he’s proud of his accomplishments, but doesn’t look back at it as some kind of triumph.

Another parent (P3) also noted Coach A’s desire to credit others for the team’s successes, and his contentment as a high school football coach at CHS:

Just watching his interviews on TV over the years, he never takes credit for his accomplishments. It is always everybody else that he gives credit to. And you know, I know he has turned down jobs at big time schools over the years just to stay here and I think that says a lot in his leadership ability, just knowing that he knows what he wants and, you know, this is it.

One player had the following to say about Coach A’s humility:

Humble. Man, that guy’s humble. Because there’s, like, so many people . . . I mean, so many people . . . who just throw themselves at his feet. And he’s just . . . like, he still puts himself on your level . . . he’s never walking around with his chest up and head high. It’s same old (Coach A) just running around, throwing the football, trying to be the quarterback or DB (laughing). He’s the same old
Another player recalled,

Notre Dame called him years back and asked him to come coach in South Bend and they said, “We need an answer now.” And he said, “I’m staying here. I love coaching high school boys and teaching high school English.”

Coach A has shown through his words and actions that he is humble, but perhaps the most telling reflection of his humility is his spirituality. One of his assistants (AFC2) described the ultimate goal of Coach A’s spirituality as shown in his work as a coach:

Because it’s not about football. It’s about formation, you know. And that’s what we’ve been able to do here. We’ve been able to form these young men in the Jesuit experience, Catholic formation. Open to growth. Loving. Religious. Committed to doing justice. And intellectually competent. Those are the five components that we use in the graduate or graduation document that we want our young men to get better at these five areas. And we accomplish this in the football program.

Teachers and parents agreed also agreed that Coach A’s spirituality is critical to his success and perseverance. FT1 observed:

He always ties his faith into everything, which is incredible. He rarely gives a talk where faith and what we are all about here doesn’t come into it. That is probably a big factor in his success because he is not ever just coaching football. He is tying whatever he does into the bigger mission of the school.
P1 and her husband had this to say about spirituality and Coach A “practicing what he preaches.”

Football is secondary. It’s actually third. First and second would be God and family . . . and education. (Dad: Yeah, he always says, education, faith, and then football.) Mom: That’s why there is no practice on Sundays. Never. It doesn’t even matter if there’s a championship. I was very surprised by that. Whereas I watched my nephew, and Sunday morning they were expected to be there. I kept saying to (my son), “you’re not doing anything on Sunday?” “No. Stay to be with your family and to go to church.” That’s the kind of thing . . . say it, act it. It’s amazing.

In the focus group, the players spoke of Coach A getting the team “spiritually prepared” for games:

We go to mass before every game and he always jokes around and says he doesn’t want divine intervention. God, win us this game. But he’ll say ask God to make me be as strong as I can for this game. Help me to be as prepared as I can be for this game. And, you know, just give me the strength for my teammates for this game.

Coach A is teaching these young men how to pray for the right things—strength, preparedness, and humility.

Finally, with regard to humility, Coach A was described as selfless in the interviews. BKC expressed admiration for Coach A because of how he imparts his vision through the school’s mission to serve others:
I really believe that (Coach A’s) vision for our student-athletes . . . when they graduate from Catholic High School that they really believe in the philosophy of our school, “men for others.” You know, it’s not just about us, it’s about helping as many people as we can. (Coach A) wants his kids to be successful, but he also wants them to understand there’s so much more that we could do to help other people. We’re very blessed here. We’re very fortunate to have some of the things that we have. And our kids, I think, see that. And I think when our kids graduate, they say, “you know what? I’ve been very fortunate and there’s got to be some way I can help somebody else.”

P2 found it both impressive and telling that Coach A knows everybody’s name.

He knows me by name. He knows all my kids. He remembers them all. It’s just awesome to me that he can remember that, you know, with as many students as he’s had through. He will tell you that he’s a teacher before he’s a coach. And my sons will say that’s true.

The school motto, “men for others” was also mentioned in the focus group as they discussed Coach A’s personal selflessness and its effect on the players:

It’s a total message of selflessness. And the big part about Coach A is that you have to be a man for others 24/7, not when you feel good or when you want to, or if it’s, like, the big week . . . He’s the man for others. He does all the work for us every week. . . . Everyday. So again, too, it’s like a challenge to us. We have to be that all the time, especially when we’re tired or mad or we’re just frustrated
about something. We always have to be that man for others. And he calls us to
do the right thing all the time, not just some of the time.

The people surrounding Coach A recognize that he is a humble man who is there
to serve others and that he is also trying to bring others to understand the importance of
being humble, spiritual and selfless.

**Work ethic.** “Leaders aren’t born, they are made. And they are made just like
anything else, through hard work. And that’s the price we’ll have to pay to achieve that
goal, or any goal” (Vince Lombardi).

Work ethic has been defined as the daily, hourly, tireless effort towards the cause.
Other terms have been incorporated into the work ethic model: organized and structured,
preparedness, and finally, adaptability. Work ethic has been recognized as physical,
mental, collaborative, and individual. For this study, the concept of providing a good
eexample was also important to understanding the idea of work ethic.

Having a few years of hindsight, FP2 recognized the great amount of effort put
into coaching by Coach A and the other assistants:

Coach A and the other coaches work tirelessly. I know that they do from
spending part of a season coaching with them. The amount of time that they put
in, the amount of film work and strategizing and game planning is immense. And
then you have to teach full-time on top of that. Plus you’ve got a family at home
and it is a seven day a week job and you are working around the clock for some
minimal amount of extra money received for coaching. Coaches obviously don’t
coach at the high school level for personal gain. I think they do it for the school
and I think they do it for the kids . . . to enrich all of their lives and to make them better players and better men. Coach A is the type of man that has so positively touched and influenced thousands of young men over men over the years, and will continue to do so.

Coach A definitely influenced his players through the example he sets with his dedication and work ethic. “I would say that, if it wasn’t for him, I probably wouldn’t have been as dedicated to anything in my life,” one player remarked. “He’s so dedicated himself that it makes you want to be dedicated too, and he pushes you to be your best at all times. So that’s what I love about him. He’s a great guy.”

The basketball coach agreed with this, saying,

He leads by example. What he asks of his players and of his assistant coaches he’ll do no less. He’ll do even more. So I think he sets that example and he shows you what needs to be done to have things done the right way. And I think he expects that from his players . . . that same kind of commitment.

A fellow teacher (FT2) commented on the physical demands of Coach A’s work ethic:

He does everything a hundred percent. Sometimes in the spring, I’ll look out my fourth floor window and I see him on the track shoveling the snow off the lanes to get it ready, or sweeping the sand pit for the long jump.

This work ethic inspires FT2, who added,

I try to give a hundred percent, whatever I do, and do whatever’s best for the school. But it’s hard to match him. I mean, he’s at the top. But I try to do my
best here, and that’s . . . I know he’s always trying . . . he always does his best.

And that’s all you could ask.

Coach A’s strong work ethic is also evidenced by the level of planning and the structure of his practices. AP described Coach A’s impressive level of organization and the structured nature of his football program, saying the coach is “very organized, and it seems routine without being routine.” Referring to Coach A’s daily routine, AP remarked, “I don’t really know how to explain that, but you don’t get the feeling, okay, this again . . . it is very focused, directed, preplanned, you know?” Describing how the practices are run, described them as being “very precise,” and described how the Coach adheres strictly to the set schedule.

He makes sure that, let’s say individual goes for a half hour a day, right when the hand hits thirty . . . or the six . . . then that’s when individual stops. He knows what we have to get done and when we have to get it done by.

Another player added that Coach A “makes sure that all the other coaches know the game plan . . . and that each position is doing what they’re supposed to.” As this player explained, Coach A’s role is observational in nature: “He’s, like, walking around and observing everything. But like the other player said, everything’s precise. He’s usually down with the kickers with his stopwatch making sure, like, the snap and the set is down on time.”

Although work ethic is clearly evident through the level of organization and structure, it is likewise shown through preparedness, which is a crucial element in being organized. AFC2 likens Coach A’s preparedness on the field to “life preparation.”
He wants the kids to be physically, mentally and spiritually prepared for not only what they’re doing now, but also later in life. The game of football . . . you know, people say football builds character. Well, I never believed that. I always felt that it enhances character and it reveals character. And Coach A knows that through the things that we do: the team building, the camaraderie, the relying on one another . . . community . . . all this stuff is going to help you down the road as an adult, as a father, as a parent, as a husband. All these things that he talks about, you know, about being physically, mentally, and spiritually prepared. Prepared to do what? Not just play a football game, but prepared to continue on in life. It’s about how are these kids growing? How are they maturing? How are they getting better? How are they becoming better human beings? You know, all that stuff goes beyond football. Football is one of those little tools that we can use to get these kids to that next level.

Alternately, the players recognized the more immediate need for good preparation:

Just taking everything as it comes and not jumping ahead at anything. You know, people always talk about rivalry week 10. And Coach A, it’s week one, we’re worrying about week one. If it’s the first practice, we’re only worrying about the first practice. And he never gets ahead of himself. He’s always just really focused on what’s at hand.

The final element of work ethic identified in the results of this study is adaptability. This characteristic relates to preparedness as one must prepare for the unexpected. Adaptability indicates a level of preparedness in which complications are
not a deterrent from the work at hand. FP1 had an interesting thought on the subject of Coach A’s adaptability,

I would say he is very calculated, you know? He . . . I guess he approaches either a problem, whether it’s football or whether it’s in class, like a live organism. And he is very good at that being change. And then on top of that . . . on top of being just very smart about solving problems, he is also just a very motivational person.

Through these examples, Coach A was shown to be a hard working person, a person with truly strong work ethic. Work ethic takes self-commitment, organization, and structure, which itself requires preparedness for the challenges ahead and also the adaptability to respond to adversity.

**Positive.** “You do not lead by hitting people over the head—that’s assault, not leadership” (President Dwight D. Eisenhower).

The term “positive” involves being encouraging, uplifting, and reassuring. In my research, Coach A was shown to exhibit these characteristics. In addition to the word positive, the term “purpose” has been considered to show the positive nature of Coach A, as his purposeful coaching is reflective of his positive nature.

According to the assistant principal, Coach A’s positive approach to coaching and teaching is demonstrated in the patience he has with his players and students:

I think his technique in review, going over things, both on the field and in the classroom to make sure you got it okay. And what is really brought is you can see his patience. So if you didn’t get it, “well, I figured there might be a chance you wouldn’t get it. That is why we are doing this. So I am not going to be surprised
or angry or upset.” That’s the point, you know? Not doing this to say, “Oh, you dummy.” He is like, “no, we need to repeat. We need to go over things. That is part of it,” you know? So I always appreciated his patience. That is why I love him in the classroom because, you know, he works his magic that way in there.

FT1 also noted Coach A’s positive approach, which she sees as being demonstrated through his optimism and constructive criticism:

I think he teaches the kids . . . to be winners, you got to be optimistic and think you can win. And (Coach A) never . . . and my husband used to say this all the time . . . that (Coach A) would never put a kid down for making a mistake. He will use it as a teachable moment, but he won’t put a kid down or blame something on a kid, you know? I mean, he will be positive. He will always look for the optimism in something and look for a way to use it as a teaching moment. And I am sure that is what he does in the classroom. He won’t chide a kid or reprimand a kid. He will use it in a way that becomes constructive.

An anecdote offered by P2 demonstrates Coach A’s ability to handle challenging situations in a positive way. This particular anecdote relates to good sportsmanship and how Coach A handled a situation in which the players faced a very talented opponent, who also was a little troublesome on the field:

That kid was kind of a punk on the field. There’s no question. He was a punk on the field. And he was just, you know, a lot of that talk . . . what do they call that? . . . Trash talk, there you go. (laughing) And you know, he could see it and he told the team, he goes, “just every time that there’s something just put your hand out
and say, ‘good luck. Good luck.’” And it was just an approach of kindness and
that collapsed him. (The Player) fell apart in that game. I mean, he knew the
approach. It was just amazing how he could just . . . it takes talent. It takes a real
gift to be able to do those kinds of things without, you know, the bad
sportsmanship. That’s not a part of the game. So when you can keep the good
sportsmanship and not stoop to that level, overall, day after day, game after game,
it is something that these kids will take with them for the rest of their lives . . . you
know, there wasn’t a revenge factor involved in how he handles things.

An interesting and unique perspective offered in this study came from the player
who left the team (PWLT). This individual had the following to say about Coach A’s
positive behavior; “I mean, he just never puts somebody down, I guess. If you do what
you’re told and do your stuff, he’ll give you, like a pat on the back. He makes you feel
like you’re actually contributing.” When asked to explain his reasons for leaving the
team, PWLT attributed his decision to his feeling burnt out on football and wanting to
focus on something different. He had nothing to say about Coach A; however,

I played for two years. I came in and I played defensive line. I played D-end
because I was a slow, huskier kid. And then I couldn’t gain weight, so I had to
switch to cornerback. I wasn’t really fast enough or athletic enough to start. You
know, I’ve been playing for, like, nine years. So I decided I would just take time
off, I guess, and pursue other things. Because when you’re putting all that time in
with practice and you’re not really . . . you know, you got school work. I decided
to focus on that.
When asked how Coach A reacted to his decision to quit the team, PWLT described Coach A’s positive response:

(Interviewer: How did Coach A react to you leaving the team?) His reaction? Nothing, really. He just said, “good luck with whatever you’re going to do.” Or, you know, I think he would welcome me back if I wanted to. (Interviewer: And that’s something that you’re thinking about?) No. (Interviewer: Has it affected your relationship with Coach A at all?) No. (Interviewer: You still see him in the hall and say hello? There’s no animosity? No problems?) No. (Interviewer: You’re not nervous around him or anything?) No, no tension.

On the subject of Coach A’s positive approach to coaching, the players in the focus group had much to say. The following is a sampling of descriptions of Coach A’s positivity offered in the focus group:

(Comment 1) – (Interviewer: What manner or mannerism does he use when correcting you?) I’d say he’s comical in it sometimes. I think in the classroom, especially. He’s not going to try to put you on the spot. He’s trying to at least help you learn in a way that makes it easy and that he’s not putting a ton of pressure on you. You know, on the football field, I don’t think it’s as comical when he tries to correct you, but he doesn’t raise his voice. He never really raises his voice when he’s trying to help someone or correct them.

(Comment 2) He really never gets frustrated because, you know, he’s seen everything. So he can really put it down at any level and explain it so that anyone can get better at the certain thing you’re doing.
(Comment 3) I always beat myself up after tests and whatnot, and Coach A was one of the first people to . . . to give me any credit. . . . He told me, “you’re doing fine in my class. I don’t know why you worry.” And he told me I was a great writer, which I had never heard before . . . And then he recommended me to go take AP U.S. History. And he was one of the first people to, like, just help me recognize that I’m good in school. And now I take, like, all AP and honors. And I attribute that to Coach A, because he’s the one who recommended it to me and to my parents. And so he’s definitely been a pivotal person in my life.

The players in the focus group also identified Coach A’s strong sense of purpose as a positive element in his style of coaching and teaching. “There’s nothing that man does that doesn’t have a purpose behind it,” one player explained. “Everything he does is working towards our wanted goal.” Another player remarked on how Coach A’s sense of purpose is intricately connected to every activity the team engages in, and also Coach A’s method of communicating this purposeful process as it unfolds:

Coach A always tells us what the game plan is. That’s something I’ve always particularly enjoyed, is Coach A always tells us what the plan is and what, exactly, we’re trying to get out of the day. And then we go do it. And every step from there on out . . . you know, and individual period, a group period, a team period . . . everything has its purpose and its own little way to help teach a player to get better and eventually get better as a team. And then he breaks it down at the end. You know, kind of his little reflection on practice and what we have to get done the next day.
Another player commented on Coach A’s strong sense of purpose as it related to the
more significant, long-term purpose of attending CHS and being a member of the football
team:

He was one of the first ones to say this to me in my class . . . that coming to CHS,
of course you’re going to come out smarter and probably a better athlete than
when you came in . . . but he would always express how the main goal, when you
leave, is to become a better man. Become a better person for others and always
be more helpful . . . through service and everything. Kind of learn how helping
people can be a major part of life. So he would always express to us how, even
though we’re going to come out smarter and stronger, maybe, our major goal is to
come out a better person.

The positive nature of Coach A, along with his ability to show purpose to all that
his students and athletes are doing demonstrates how he keeps his team moving in the
right direction.

**Integrity.** “A true leader has the confidence to stand alone, the courage to make
tough decisions, and the compassion to listen to the needs of others. He does not set out
to be a leader, but becomes one by the equality of his actions and the integrity of his
intent” (Douglas MacArthur).

Integrity, for this project, was defined by the combination of the following five
attributes: loyalty, consistency, accountability, honesty, and fairness. As AFC1 observed
about Coach A, “I think he talks the talk and he walks the walk in that sense. I mean, like
I said earlier, you know what he is and he stands for it.” As a person with integrity, Coach A says and does what he believes in.

TI discussed the loyal nature of Coach A, which is a true sign of integrity:

Well, I think he is loyal to the school . . . because there is not always times you agree with everything, every turn the school takes. We have gotten bigger. Things have changed a lot. But even if he disagrees with something, he may give his opinion, but he will say, “Well, I understand this is what the school has got do to,” or whatever. So I think he is loyal to the school. I think is loyal to his friends. You know, if we need something, yeah, he would be there. I think he is loyal to his colleagues. I think he is loyal to alumni. You know, if anybody wanted or needed something from him that he thought he could do, he probably would do it. Former students, players, all that.

According to P3, Coach A emphasizes academics before sports, and is consistent in practicing what he preaches in this regard:

Academic(s) . . . that is what Coach A stresses. I went to an open house and that is basically what they preached. They preached the academics of the school and Coach A will tell you that that comes first and he lives it and he breathes it. And I have seen him in action. Knowing that if there was a kid that was falling behind, that they would pull the kid, make sure that they got his grades up, didn’t matter how it would affect the football team.
The players also showed a marked awareness of Coach A’s integrity as it relates to his insistence on practicing what you preach and doing things the right way. As one student observed:

He does things in a certain way. I mean, he practices what he preaches. He doesn’t believe . . . the end justifies the means. I mean, there’s a process of getting there and it’s not, like, win at all costs with him. It’s like we’re going to do things a certain way. We’re going to do things our way. We’re going to practice our way. We’re going to not cut corners. And he doesn’t . . . whoever we’re playing, we’re going to do things our way. And he doesn’t diverge ever. He doesn’t treat anything . . . like, special. It’s this week, and we’re going to do it this way. And when someone . . . believes so much in what they do that they don’t . . . change for any occasion, it’s kind of hard not to believe it and take it on as your own vision, you know?

According to the basketball coach, consistency serves as a powerful example of Coach A’s integrity:

I just watch what he does and how he interacts with the kids and how, you know, he is the same, you know, in the 15 years that I have been coaching around. He is the exact same as he was 15 years ago and I think that says a lot, you know? I’m not talking about his coaching style. I mean, I am sure that has changed over the time, but I think just the way he interacts and the way he communicates. You want to emulate that for sure.

The players discussed Coach A’s integrity through the lens of accountability:
He holds everyone accountable. And he looks at everyone like a starter. He doesn’t care if you’re the sixth string cornerback or you’re first string cornerback, he’s going to hold you accountable. And he wants you to know, because once you get out there he doesn’t want you messing up or not knowing what you have to do. So he holds everyone at a high standard.

A person’s honesty serves as yet another indication of integrity. Parent 1 and her husband discussed the honesty of Coach A, providing the example of his practice of holding annual individual meetings with the younger players in the offseason:

A perfect example . . . he meets with every sophomore at the end of the football season. And he sits down . . . HE sits down and tells them . . . and he told us this at the freshman orientation . . . “I’m going to sit down with them after two years. If there’s another sport they like, I’m going to be honest with them and I’m going to tell them, ‘we would love to have you, but you’re going into varsity. I don’t know if you’re going to get much playing time. If it’s that you want to play a sport and fully participate, then ok.’”

Parent 3 observed Coach A’s honesty and integrity in his teaching:

As a teacher, he tells you like it is. He doesn’t sugar coat anything. He is a man of his word. And to me, I think as a parent, that is very important, where you know where your son is going to be for the next year, you know? There is no maybes or this or that. It is pretty much, this is how it is going to be and either take it or leave it, and you know, that is what I like about him.
Fairness is also an indicator of integrity, and is a unique quality held by Coach A, according to FP2.

I would say that Coach A is the type of coach . . . and probably teacher . . . that knows his star quarterback and his third string defensive tackle the same. I think he treats everybody equally. From my experience, I know that all coaches don’t operate that way. I think Coach A is the type of coach that cares about all of his players regardless of where you are at on the depth chart. And I think that is manifested in his interactions with those folks. Even when I still see him now . . . and it is not often, but once or twice a year, . . . he will still always inquire about my family, my career, my health. I sense that even 25 years removed, he still cares about me personally. And I suspect he interacts with all of his old players and students in the same manner.

Coach A’s integrity sets him apart from others, as these examples demonstrate. He has been shown to be an individual who is unwilling to compromise his integrity, which has resulted in him receiving a high level of respect and credibility within his community.

Present. “The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between, the leader is a servant” (Max DePree).

Presence was defined for this project by the ability of a person to offer himself to his followers through the simple behaviors of listening, reflecting, answering, and caring. The sub-themes of the concept of being present include being focused, calm, and reflective, as well as being a concerned and caring individual. Coach A demonstrates all
these attributes, as was shown through the data. For example, AFC2 directly attributed Coach A’s strength as a leader to his ability to be present in any given moment:

Leader, that’s sometimes an ambiguous word. What does it mean to be a leader? And to me, when it comes to Coach A . . . I read this somewhere . . . a leader is a guy that makes you better by his presence. That’s what (Coach A) is. He makes you better just by him being there and his influence. So I would consider that another way to describe (Coach A). He makes you better because of his influence and his presence. You know, great father, great husband, spiritual. Quiet. He’s also, at times, he’s quiet and doesn’t always share his innermost feelings. He keeps it close.

FP1 also recognized this quality in Coach A, commenting on his listening skills, his genuine interest in what you have to say, and his receptiveness:

I would say he is first off just very receptive . . . He is just an easy person to talk to. Receptive. And he always has a good opinion or a good take on any sort of problem you may be having. When I say receptive I mean that he takes a legitimate interest in what you are saying as opposed to going off and talking about something of his own. And he is genuinely interested in what you have to say.

The basketball coach commented on Coach A’s approachability:

(Coach A) is very approachable. He’s a busy man, but if there’s something that you need to talk to him about, he’ll make time for anybody. I think he’s very easy to approach and the discussions are open and you can talk with (Coach A) about
anything. You might not always agree with everything, but he’ll give you the
time to discuss things.

According to FT1, Coach A’s present nature is pervasive, a behavior she has seen him
demonstrate towards teachers and students alike:

(Coach A) is always very present to everyone. There are people that you will
walk in the teacher’s lounge and say, “morning everybody,” and it is like you
weren’t in there . . . But (Coach A) will always say, “how ya doin?” . . . I mean,
he is just . . . he is present to you. I guess that is the best way I can put it. He has
a real passion and . . . when you just talk to him, he puts himself in what he is
doing. You know, I don’t think he is teaching English class and thinking about
. . . Friday night’s game. He is not doing that when he is teaching in his classes.

This same idea was reinforced by another colleague, FT2, who remarked, “when you talk
to him, he gives you his full attention. He always has a hundred percent energy. He’s
always interesting to talk to.”

The players also noted Coach A’s presence. “I notice this thing that he always
goes out of his way to come up to you and see how you’re doing and just ask how you’re
doing,” one player observed. “He pretty much knows everyone on the team in the
hallways. And anywhere he sees you, he’ll just kind of come up and ask you how you’re
doing.”

While clearly present and attentive, Coach A is also receptive rather that
dominating personal interactions. The baseball coach provided a revealing description of
how Coach A handles himself in conversation:
I think he is reserved until his opinion needs to be made. I think he does a very good job of listening and then reacting. I think he is a . . . but he doesn’t pull any punches either. When he reacts, he tells it how it is and I have a lot of respect for somebody that doesn’t pull any punches and that, you know, hits you right between the eyes. I love watching him listen to a conversation and then interject his thoughts. Because you can just see it . . . like where he is going to go. And I will just sit here and watch. Like a couple of folks just talking and then watch him give one of these (tapping fingers on the table). And then he gets very excited . . . “this is the way it should be and this is the way we are going to do it.”

The players in the focus group offered several observations of how Coach A is a focused, calm, and reflective leader. “He really never gets frustrated because he’s seen everything,” one player commented. “So he can really put it down at any level and explain it so that anyone can get better at the certain thing you’re doing.” Another player provided the following anecdote to demonstrate the strength of this character trait in Coach A:

In the 2011 playoffs, we were playing Saint Ed’s. About midway through the third quarter, we’re down seventeen to three, and some guys are starting to get a little worried. We’re having trouble putting points on the board. There’s Coach A, pacing back and forth, headset on, not saying anything. Just staying focused. And I think that’s just kind of how his demeanor is. Never once have I seen him showing any doubt. It doesn’t matter what point you are in the game, he’s always focused . . . just pacing back and forth. He knows exactly what his plan is. And
he’s always right, because we wound up winning that game 20 to 17, on a game-winning field goal.

Much of the data spoke to the fact that Coach A is a very concerned and caring individual. FP2 had this to say:

I can tell you that every time I see him, even today, that you are met with a hand shake and, “how ya doin’?” and “how’s life treatin’ ya?” And I think he is genuinely interested in knowing that. So, it does make you feel a little bit special that the guy with the success that Coach A has had... and I think he is in Mid-Ohio Hall of Fame now... and you know, always in the news about something, that he still cares, even today. It’s a bit bland, but (a word I would use to describe Coach A would be) caring.

The assistant principal also had a lot to say in regards to the caring nature of Coach A. “I think he cares,” he explained, “having experienced him at the different levels, you know, it is kind of an evolution for me, you know?... but all the time it was someone who is interested in what you are doing... Just always welcoming to hear what you have to say.” When asked what words he would use to describe Coach A, the assistant principal responded by saying, “Absolute concern and care for his players and students. Absolute. You just can feel it. It is almost palpable when he talks about them, when you see him in the class.”

The players recognized this care and concern as well. For example, one player likened Coach A’s relationship with his players to a father and son relationship, explaining, “just like a... kid would talk to his father and how his father would just
show him things in a calm manner back at home or give him pointers like that. It’s just like that.” This player continued by describing the easiness of problem solving with Coach A:

When something goes wrong or you may have questions, it’s just like talking to your friend. Or talking to, like, your father. It’s like, “hey Coach, what do you want me to do on this?” “Well, you know, you can play it . . . you can cheat it a little bit, give it a little leeway, but don’t get caught cheating. You know, we lose when you cheat.” So it’s just like talking to your father. He gives you a lot of pointers.

Another student mentioned Coach A’s concern for the physical safety of the players:

We always talk about being state champs and how important that is to all of us, but recently I’ve noticed a big thing for him is player safety. You know, he cares about each one of us as an individual. We just got fitted for helmets down there and Coach A was down there with us, individually fitting us for a helmet. He always talks about making sure you have air in your helmet. He’s always encouraging the linemen to get their knee braces on and stuff like that. He obviously cares about winning, but he cares about everyone’s safety just as much.

These examples from the data reveal the presence Coach A exudes with everyone in his community through his focused, calm nature, and reflection during tense moments. The data also reveals a genuine level of concern and care on the part of Coach A, and how Coach A shows his presence through just a simple “hello”.

Empowering. “It is better to lead from behind and to put others in front, especially when you celebrate victory when nice things occur. You take the front line when there is danger. Then people will appreciate your leadership” (Nelson Mandela).

To be a great leader, it is important to empower others to get things done and then trust them to do so, therefore, empowering people and trusting people go hand in hand. A leader who empowers others does not micromanage, but instead leads by demonstrating a sense of faith in the abilities of the followers to accomplish the tasks that they have been entrusted to complete, and giving them the freedom to do so. According to AFC1, Coach A is such a leader.

He’s a guy who likes to encourage you to take action, and then he’ll put his input in if he disagrees. But for the most part, he turns things over to you. At the same time, he’s very open to giving you counsel and advice and suggestions and things like that at the same time.

AFC2 echoed this sentiment, saying:

He hires you to do a job and he expects you to do it . . . And unless it’s like whacko out of the box, he’s going to let you coach the way you want to coach. If things are not going well, whether it’s, you know, wins and losses . . . which doesn’t happen too often. But if there’s things that he thinks are just totally against his fiber, then he’ll say something to you and try to get you to do it another way. But to a fault, sometimes, he will let you coach the way you want to do it, how you want to do it, when you want to do it.
P1 and her husband also observed this empowering dynamic among Coach A and his assistant coaches. As the husband observed,

I watch him on the sidelines and he’s kind of hands off. He really allows those coaches to make the plays... When he goes up and down the sidelines, he’s expecting something to happen, which usually does. But... you always hear that’s a good sign of leadership to delegate.

P1 agreed with her husband, adding, “and have confidence in those guys.” Her husband continued, “Yeah, and he has confidence in those guys... play calling and all that stuff, he really allows those assistant coaches to do it.” Coach A’s method of empowering his assistant coaches was also observed one of the players in the focus group, who remarked,

He doesn’t talk much. He lets the other coaches talk... so he has faith in them to just let them talk. And if he sees something he might point it out, but he really doesn’t say much.

Coach A’s empowering nature is rooted in his sense of trust in others. This trust given by Coach A ultimately becomes as fulfilling for the followers as accomplishing the task independently. AFC1 discussed this concept as it relates to Coach A at length:

I think he encourages people to be self-motivated. But he’ll let you know when he thinks you’re slacking. I think he expects your best effort all the time and expects your heart to be in the right place. And he expects you to be committed. And those who aren’t disappoint him. With kids he’s very much that way. He doesn’t rely on talent, he relies on character. You get fulfillment by knowing that he trusts you and he expects you to persevere. But again, out of loyalty and his
coaching style, the offensive coaches pretty much have a free hand and (Coach A) sort of gives input. But that’s his style. He’s the head coach by not being the head coach.

Coach A is arguably the most successful high school coach ever. Interestingly however, according to the data from this study, this leader is better known for delegating decisions than making them himself.

Unique. “Our chief want is someone who will inspire us to be what we know we could be” (Ralph Waldo Emerson).

Above all of these themes and qualities, or precisely because of them, Coach A is a unique and exceptional individual. The data presented a multitude of comments on the subject of Coach A’s uniqueness. BBC noted, “When my career is over, hopefully many years from now, I want people to look at me like they do him. I mean he is the ultimate leader in every conversation that I am ever involved in.” Observing the high level of reverence Coach A’s leadership has earned him, he continued,

He is the guy that everyone turns to and I think that is the mark of a good leader?

Whenever there is an issue or we have a group or a committee that is meeting, everyone talks and then looks at him as “okay, now what do you think?”

BBC also shared his experiences as a peer and colleague of Coach A, and the opportunities he has had to learn from a man he considers to be the best at what he does:

When . . . issues come up and we are talking through them, you just kind of feel like, alright, I am doing it the right way. He agrees with me. Whenever he agrees with me I feel like, alright, I must be doing something right. But he also makes
me want to be better. . . I aspire to be like him. I think a lot of young coaches should. And if they don’t, then there is something wrong with them. I want to be like him.

Finally, BBC summed up his feelings about the uniqueness of Coach A by saying,

I think he is an inspiration without trying to be an inspiration. I think he inspires just by going about his business. And you know, he can inspire kids, but he is certainly doing it to me as a coach and a colleague.

AFC2 expressed some thoughts on the individuality of Coach A, and the effect this remarkable individual has on his community:

He brings a sense of purpose. He brings a sense of making sure that everybody is on the same page, organization-wise. Making sure we’re doing the things that we need to do in order to be successful as coaches and also as players. So he just brings an aura to the practice. I mean, this is Coach A. I mean, these kids . . . they’ve seen him when they were in the second and third grade coming to games. “Oh, that’s (Coach A).” Well, now they’re playing for this guy and that’s something. I mean, whatever he says, these kids hang on like . . . “Wow, it’s phenomenal . . . I’m playing for (Coach A).”

“He just is what he is,” AFC2 added. “You know, Urban Meyer, when he comes in and he talks to (Coach A), his comment . . . is, ‘(Coach A) is different.’ He’s just straight and narrow, right down the middle.”
The assistant principal also expressed his sentiments on Coach A’s uniqueness in the following conversation from our interview, noting that his leadership is based in both logic and emotion:

I haven’t seen anything like it. . . . It is not an aggressive leadership style. It is more . . . like he works his way to get people on board. So you are not thinking that he is trying to steer or guide you. Kind of a surreptitious way he goes about it. (Interviewer: What do you think the motivating or manipulative factor is in such a style?) I think a light bulb goes off and you say, “Oh that is what he was taking about! Oh I get that. Okay, I can follow this guy.” (Interviewer: So logic?) Yeah, logic, I think. But also . . . there is an emotional side to it too, where it is like, yeah, this is good, this is a good way to go and I’m feeling it too. I’m understanding it, but I feel it too. So I think there is . . . which I think he appeals to a greater number of people. . . . Because usually you can be one way or the other. “Okay I get that, I understand what you are saying.” Emotional side, not so much. Or it is the other way, it’s like, “yeah, yeah, I’m feeling that.” And they might not really understand it or not really be concerned about the implications logically, but . . . they are feeling it.

The parents I interviewed likewise recognized the exceptional nature of Coach A. “I’m glad (my son) got to play for him and play for CHS while he was there,” shared P1. “Coach A’s not going to be there forever. And I would say I’m fortunate that (my son) got to experience that.” P2 observed that Coach A’s unique presence is felt school-wide, not just amongst the football team or in his classroom:
What makes him unique in the school is that even though he’s such a presence for the football team, he’s also . . . the whole school knows him. You don’t have to be on the football team. You don’t have to be in his class. You know, he just has this presence that is just peaceful, calm, inviting, and approachable. . . . He doesn’t have a big ego. At least, if he does, he masks it extremely well.

(laughing) I’m just delighted that my sons have gotten to know him.

Referencing the combination of so many effective qualities in one person, FP1 called Coach A “the perfect storm:”

He just thinks things through very intensely. . . . He cares about all the kids coming out . . . being good people. And he wants . . . all the kids to come out being more than just football players. I think he is also, in picking the assistant coaches, he probably looks for coaches that kind of embody that . . . that are going to try and not just teach kids football, but also have a moral responsibility to, . . . and so he surrounds himself with coaches that care about that as well. And so you’ve got himself being very calculating, surrounding himself with very good people. The whole coaching staff is, you know, just like that. They are all very great people. And then, on top of that, you just throw in the fact that he is very charismatic, very electric. And you just put all those together and it is like the perfect storm.

In the focus group, the following sampling of comments about the uniqueness and exceptionalism of Coach A by his players demonstrates the powerful effect this
remarkable leader has had on his players and how blessed they feel to have had him in their young lives.

(Comment 1) One of a kind. He definitely . . . out of all the coaches I’ve had, he finds a way to inspire his players like no one I’ve ever seen before. And how he does that without being . . . mean about it or, like, snarling or yelling at people. He does it in such a calm way and every time he speaks, everybody just wants to listen and hear what he has to say.

(Comment 2) Once he shows you that if you put your mind to something, you can achieve something very great and it just makes you feel like, wow, this guy’s a legend and I am blessed to be able to be coached under this man. And I feel inspired and . . . I don’t know, I’m lucky.

(Comment 3) When you’re playing for a guy with that much success, you have to believe in it. Because when you sit down with your one on one meetings and say, you know, “I’m here because I want to be a state champion. I’m here because I want to be the best I can be,” then you have to believe in what he’s preaching. And that’s another thing with Coach A . . . and that’s how much we respect him . . . when he tells us to do something, we do it. No questions asked. Even if we have a problem with it, we bite our lip and we do what he asks us to do to get better. And that’s why I think we all agree with the vision.

(Comment 4) No one can hold their self against the guy. I mean no one. Let’s just say it this way, I would always compare them to Coach A . . . Any
coach that would come after him, we would have to compare to him, and it just
wouldn’t be the same.

(Comment 5) Besides sweet baby Jesus, and my Dad, the only man I love,
to be honest . . . (laughing) . . . I’m not joking. I mean, that’s the only man I love,
you know? And hopefully, God willing, I can come back and have my son play
for him and experience the genuine, one-of-a-kind coaching . . . and best coaching
. . . you would ever get from a guy.

(Comment 6) He’s a great man. Great morals . . . and I’m not planning on
playing college football either. I really want to hang up my cleats knowing that I
was coached by the greatest man in the United States, who knows the game of
football like no other. And what he’s inspired all of us to do, I don’t think, could
ever be recreated by any other coach.

(Comment 7) I think in the field of sports, at any level . . . college,
professional, high school . . . you have your Vince Lombardi’s, you have your
John Wooden’s, and I think Coach A’s right up there with them. One of the most
influential men in sports, at any level, around the nation. He’s a man who truly
teaches us that if we truly make a commitment fully, that everything we want or
everything we search for . . . and greatness . . . is truly in our grasp.

(Comment 8) There’s been plenty of guys that have played here and went
on to Division I and they came back and said there’s just nothing like playing
Catholic High School football for Coach A. You’re not going to find anywhere
else in the next level after high school. There’s no one quite like him.
Clearly from the comments given in all of the data, a unique person has been discussed.

**Coach A Interviews**

In the interviews conducted with Coach A, he indicated a number of reasons why he became a teacher and a coach. He discussed how the most influential people to him were those to whom teaching wasn’t “drudgery.” As a student, during his junior and senior years at CHS, he also found English to be an interesting subject. A coach who inspired Coach A early in his coaching career was the first head coach when he graduated college. Coach A had the following to say about this individual who had a strong influence on his path in life:

I thought he was, first of all, a brilliant man. He taught Latin and some Greek, but mostly Latin. And he was a scholar, but he enjoyed football. And enjoyed coaching football. And I thought that was interesting . . . the idea that, you know, both. That’s, I think, a good example for kids. You know, here’s someone who, from eight in the morning until three is really into teaching their subject. Then the bell rings, put that whistle on and get out there and teach in another way.

Coach A discussed the idea of how, early on in his career, he really enjoyed the challenge of coaching young men. “I liked the challenge of it,” he remarked, “and I still challenge our kids, but I’m not the military captain. I have my own personality and that’s how I do it. But kids know this is what you do. Do it right, you know?” Coach A went directly into teaching and coaching at CHS from college, where he had played football. He went to college at John Carroll, which used to be a part of CHS. He was injured his senior year and couldn’t play, so his old JV coach, then the varsity head coach at CHS,
asked him to come back and coach. “It worked out nicely that there was an English opening,” Coach A recalled, noting that the timing was fortunate.

And the athletic department said, “hey, we would like to get this kid in.” And so it worked out. But there was no guarantee that English opening was going to be there. I mean, you’re in a Catholic school. There’s no guarantee there’s openings (laughing).

During the interview process, Coach A offered several reasons why he loves coaching and teaching. “First of all, I always say it keeps me young, . . . and they’re fun, you know? They have a sense of humor. I like it,” he remarked. “They have lots of energy, so you have to match that a little bit. That’s good for me. That brings in kind of a vibrancy to you a little bit.” Coach A also discussed how he really enjoys the age group he works with:

I enjoy this age bracket to work with. I always feel like, as ninth graders, they’re boys. By the time they’re walking down that aisle getting their diploma, they’re men. And in those four years, you see kids come to a better understanding. You see kids mature, not just physically, but emotionally. And you start seeing kids where the light bulb goes on . . . what do you want to say? They start getting it. They start finding themselves a little bit and what interests them, I should say. So I think that’s important.

Coach A was chosen to be the focus of this study because of to his 40 years of experience, his great successes as a head football coach (and head track coach for that matter), his great enjoyment of the job and the vocation, and most especially his great
love of seeing the development of the young men he works with. Because of all of these factors, Coach A is an excellent candidate for the subject of a study in leadership.

First interview. The first interview with Coach A occurred when he came down to Columbus for a track meet. The interview was conducted in a hotel room where Coach A was staying for the weekend’s event. I met Coach A in the lobby and then we went to the room, where I set up the recording devices (both main and backup) and got out notebook and pen. It was early on a Saturday morning and both the interviewee and interviewer were in good spirits.

The questions for the first interview with Coach A were different from the questions for the other participants and the focus group, which occurred subsequent to this interview. The questions posed in this interview were designed to begin the probe into what elements of character and behavior make up the most successful coach in Ohio. Each question was designed to delve into the mind of the subject, allowing him to process and answer fully. The questions are as follows:

Question 1—What interested you and ultimately motivated you to become a teacher and a coach?

Question 2—What about coaching, specifically football coaching, do you enjoy the most?

Question 3—Describe the kind of teacher and coach you are.

Question 4—How would you define your leadership style? What kind of leader are you?

Question 5—Describe a typical football practice.
Question 6—Do you create a vision for your team? What is it?

Question 7—How do you get a unified vision and motivate all involved to work together towards it?

Question 8—What would you want other people to know about your teaching and coaching philosophies?

Question 9—What do you feel is important about your teaching and coaching philosophies?

Question 10—What is the most essential element of coaching?

Question 11—Any final thoughts?

In this section of Chapter IV, the themes that were drawn out from the data of the other interviews and the player focus group have been correlated to the data that was gleaned from the interviews with Coach A. During the coding process, it became apparent that the before and after interviews with Coach A consistently returned to the eight major themes that emerged from the other participant interviews. Again, these themes were: passion (motivating, inspiring and eloquent); humility (spirituality, selflessness); work ethic (organized and structured, preparedness, adaptable); positive (purpose); integrity (consistent, accountability, honest, fair); present (focused and calm and reflective, concerned, & caring); empowering (trusting); and unique.

**Passion.** Coach A believes that one of his best attributes that motivates players and students is his sense of humor:

I have a sense of humor. And I think that’s important whether you’re in coaching or whatever you get into. There’s going to be good days and there are going to be
bad days. And if you’re working with other people they’ve got to like being with you. I think some of the best camaraderie you can have in a business is that in the office people have fun and kind of enjoy being there.

This sense of humor is very much connected to the passion he has for teaching and coaching. His love of these activities and the work that he is doing brings him happiness, which contributes to his attitude and sense of humor and lightheartedness.

**Humility.** Coach A describes himself as a person who does not display ego: “I don’t really get a big ego about anything,” he remarked. “Obviously in human beings, ego can be good because you take pride in what you do. I think that’s important. Don’t get me wrong,” he clarified. Coach A continued with this self-analysis by pointing out that he gives up a lot of the decision making and responsibility of running the team to others, both coaches and players. Coach A provided excellent insight into his sense of humility and spirituality in the following description he offered about how winning is an *earned blessing*:

Let’s get this done with saying this . . . winning is an earned blessing. So get that out of the way and concentrate on the idea of “earned.” Don’t get all hung up with the winning. It’s an earned blessing. It may happen. The ball bounces strange ways. So concentrate on the word “earned.” And I think that’s important, the idea that the work ethic, the vision, and understanding that there’s no guarantee, but this is the only way you’re going to get to that earned blessing . . . is there’s a work ethic and there’s a vision and you work towards it.
Great leaders must practice what they preach, and the data from the participants coupled with the responses of Coach A has shown that this humble coach achieves this standard to a great degree.

**Work ethic.** The most prevalent theme in this first interview with Coach A is that of work ethic. Coach A believes the most important element to success in young men, whether it is in the classroom or on the football field, is work ethic. According to Coach A, this applies to himself and his staff as well as the players. He believes he and his coaching staff must progress each new season to stay ahead of the competition:

Seeing progress. Obviously individually, I think a coach needs to have that feel that you want to stay on the cutting edge. The game evolves a lot. And it’s a game where no one ever can say, “got it! I’m good. I don’t have to research anything anymore. I don’t have to look at . . .“ There’s no way that happens. There’s always that . . . at the end of the season . . . there’s a little bit of a need to sort of deprogram a little bit and relax. And then, sure enough, there’s football clinics.

A great work ethic to Coach A includes keeping sharp on the technical side of the game just as much as the strategic side of the game:

Whether it’s defensive back or quarterback or linebacker, I find it interesting to hear (technique talks at clinics) or to discuss that. Maybe that’s because of my track background, because that’s so technical . . . the events. And the ability to teach that technique and what drill would help that technique. I find that, more likely, the first thing that I look at. Because schemes . . . everybody has the chalk.
Everybody can kind of work on schemes and pass patterns and stuff like that. I’m not knocking it. Those are important. You always look at those, and formations and so on. But I don’t know, I think you can diagram all those you want but if the technique is not there you’re just not getting it done. I don’t care what. It could be the greatest play in the world, but you know, you got to block it and you got to execute it and so on.

These comments show that Coach A believes very strongly in the preparedness of his team through intensive and exhaustive technique training. Coach A found great pleasure in sharing that the hard work of his players paid off not just in the short-run, but in the future actions of these individuals. “I’ve had so many guys over the years that have been that guy and have gone on to be CEOs of companies and just really successful in their life,” he shared. “And they’ll come back and tell you, ‘I kind of learned from (playing football) that it’s a lot of people working together for a goal and sacrificing.’”

**Positive.** Coach A is almost always positive, one of his best attributes. He very firmly believes that all members of his class or team must be positive to be successful, beginning with the individuals he chooses to work with his team—the assistant coaches. Coach A equates positivity with the ability of the coaches to work together and have fun, and be comfortable in the work that they do together:

I think some of the best camaraderie you can have in a business is that in the office people have fun and kind of enjoy being there. Obviously there’s work to be done but they like working with those people. . . . I see people leaving a certain job to go to another job that’s almost parallel . . . they weren’t comfortable in the
environment, you know? If people are comfortable in the environment, it’s amazing how work gets done. I think it’s important . . . if you’re the head coach or you’re someone in charge, . . . that people enjoy working with you.

In addition to being comfortable together, these coaches must be able to effectively communicate to the players the purpose of all aspects of the football process in a positive way. Coach A spent a large amount of time discussing this idea, as the following examples demonstrate:

(Example 1) What are we accomplishing at this point in the practice? It’s ‘individual period’ . . . well that’s certainly individual technique period. So there’s a reason for this drill. Here’s the reason. We’ve got to get better at this and so let’s concentrate on this. Maybe the next section is more of a group work. And obviously there’s 11 players on your team and there’s 22 variables out there at every play. And so there’s a reason I’m taking this gap. I may not make the play, but because I did this, the other guy makes the play. And we’ve got to come to that understanding that that’s a good thing and you don’t have to run around being a hero. Things like that. I think is very valuable. Very valuable that they can see there’s a progression of how you approach a problem.

Example 2 relates to the pre-practice ritual that Coach A uses to help focus his team through the purpose of that day’s practice:

(Example 2) We gather a little bit just for like two minutes and I talk to the whole team. Usually it is contributing to structure, “all right, there will be a couple of key things we’re working on today. A couple of things the opponent is showing
in film. We have to get ready for this.” Just little things like that. Takes two minutes.

Ultimately, Coach A hopes to positively communicate to his players his belief that the purpose of football is to help in the preparation of these young men for the rigors, pitfalls, and realities of their impending adulthood:

(Example 3) Well, I mentioned the idea of preparedness being mental, physical, and spiritual. Because I’m saying that it’s a great teaching tool. I think where people would look back as far as the football experience . . . A lot of kids enter college going, ‘yeah, football was fun, but I’ve got other things I want to do.’ But I hope they learned something from it. The idea that you prepare. You prepare for what you’re doing, and mentally and physically, you take care of yourself.

**Integrity.** The way Coach A creates this positive environment shows the high level of integrity he possesses. He is honest with his players and students. He is fair in his judgment. Most importantly, he holds his players, students, coaches, and most especially himself, accountable for the success of each day’s work. An excellent example of Coach A’s honesty is his regular practice of meeting individually with each and every sophomore and junior (who will be juniors and seniors) in the offseason:

In December and January . . . I meet with every sophomore and junior, just for a few minutes. And I think it starts there. The meeting lasts between five and ten minutes. And the basic purpose of the meeting is to say, “okay, this is where you’re at. Nobody else is around. I want to tell you what you need to work on and what you’ve done well.” I think we talk very quickly about . . . what do you
think about next year? I mean, I think we’re pretty strong in certain areas. We need to develop here, but we could be very good, hopefully.” So that starts there on kind of saying what a goal would be, because I think to have a vision, you have to have a goal. And I’ll be honest with you, at our place, talking about a goal, you have to start saying state championship. For me to just say, “hey, we can make the playoffs,” I think kids would look at me. I think one of the most important things is to be very honest with the kid in that meeting.

A result of these honest exchanges in a safe and private environment, the team has seen great productivity and player retention, which is extremely important to success. Coach A likes to finish the meeting simply, as he explained:

I think that honesty Coach A is an inspirational leader whose legacy will be around long after he is gone. He is an icon to the people at Catholic High School and others throughout the profession of teaching and coaching. The fact that he is a transformational leader will be news to him. He is not focused on being any one thing, or having any trait that has been identified in this project. All he is and has been concerned with is getting up every day and being the best teacher and coach he can be. It is people like Coach A that make teaching and coaching great professions, or vocations, as Coach A would call them. When others start to look into his life and the lives of others like him, the ideas that he stands for (without really preaching them) will spread, allowing others to emulate his coaching techniques and behavior. When this happens, their schools will become lead by better prepared leaders. The more that people learn about teachers and coaches
like Coach A, the more prepared for positive leadership the future coaches and teachers out there will be as Coach A would say: “Just get a little better every day, and anything is possible!” . . . because nobody else is in the room. I’m just talking. I’m not embarrassing you because this is an honest conversation. And really, over the years, I think every kid got up and said, “well, thanks Coach,” and shook my hand and said, “you’re telling me exactly what I need to know.” And that’s important.

Present. Many of Coach A’s players, students, and colleaguesremarked that he was very present in his daily interactions, and in his approach to coaching and teaching. Although Coach A seemed less self-aware of this personal attribute than those around him, he did make the following observation, which relates to his desire to be present for his players:

I really think it’s important that the player feels like the coach is really there to help them. Why is the kid out there? The kid loves the game of football. So much so that they put in the off season in a weight room. Are you kidding me? It’s more fun to be in the gym shooting hoops and having a pickup game. That’s way more fun. But because you’ve made this commitment . . . that’s an important word to me . . . you take care of business first. You’re going to go to the weight room first and then you can play your pickup basketball game. That’s fine. But take care of business. And that’s sacrifice . . . Here you are in August in double sessions. What person in their right mind would say that’s fun? It’s hard! But it’s worth it. One would hope that as this young man that’s said, “it’s important to
me,” that he looks at the coach as someone who . . . this guy’s trying to help me become the best I can be at this with my God-given talent. So I think a coach always should be coming across going, “now when you make that cut, try to sync a little. Make that plan. Work on it this way.” And then the kid will be, “yeah, okay, I’ll keep working on it.” I think that’s important because what the kid is feeling then is that the coach is trying to help me do this and help me become better . . . Even in track, you put together these workouts and they’re hard! “But now fellas, do you understand what we’re trying to do here? We’re trying to build your threshold level so that you can . . .” “Okay, I get it.” You know? And I think it’s important for kids to feel that . . . the reason the coach is giving the structure or putting a demand here a bit is trying to help us to become better.

Good environment. Good environment.

**Empowering.** Coach A’s assistant coaches had the most to say about how he trusts and empowers them. This was another theme in which the coach himself seemed less aware, or focused, on this particular quality. He did, however, offer some insight into his method of entrusting a great deal of responsibility to the assistant coaches and empowering them to take ownership of many coaching activities.

An assistant coach needs to take ownership of what they’re doing and for me to walk down and say, “no, you’re doing it wrong. This is how you should do it.” I’ll discuss things with every assistant and say, “okay, let’s talk about what we’re trying to do here,” and so on, but if the assistant coach takes ownership, he’s going to research it and he’s going to work at it. . . . I’ve always been more than
willing to do that. And I think you get way more done that way because if that’s not working out for that assistant, if he takes ownership of it, he’ll fix it, right? He doesn’t need me nagging him.

**Unique.** One of Coach A’s most unique attributes is that he leads by allowing others to lead. His uniqueness would be apparent to anyone who interacts with him. According to Coach A, it is important that every leader be true to their own unique personality and style of leading rather than trying to emulate someone else. “I think my leadership style fits my personality. And I would advise any young coach to do it that way,” he insisted. “If you’re not Vince Lombardi, don’t try to be Vince Lombardi.”

Using two college football coaches as examples, he remarked,

Nick Saban coaches his way. Jim Tressel coached his way. Personalities are different. Just there’s some different ideas. But don’t ask Nick Saban to be Jim Tressel and vice-versa. That’s their personality and the way they coach. They fit with what they’re doing.

**Second interview.** The second interview with Coach A took place after all of the other participant interviews and the focus group had been conducted. This time the interview took place in the coaches’ offices at Catholic High School on the morning of the football team’s first scrimmage of the season. There was plenty of time allotted to complete the interview. For me, this particular interview was a little bittersweet, as it was the last interview for this project and I had really enjoyed the interviewing process. This was perhaps the most important interview of them all.
The questions for the second interview with Coach A were derived from the information I had collected throughout all of the previous interviews. I developed these questions with the intention of pursuing certain intriguing ideas and thoughts that emerged from this process that I wanted to learn the perspective of Coach A. Here are the questions:

Question 1—Tell me how to inspire someone.

Question 2—What makes you change a plan (day to day, year to year), and for what reasons would you alter what you do as a coach or teacher?

Question 3—How do you get people to focus on fundamentals?

Question 4—How do you help someone succeed?

Question 5—What is the most important element to practice?

Question 6—Please put your vision for your football program into one sentence.

Question 7—What does virtue mean to you? Which virtue do you hold most dear?

Question 8—How do you teach and coach accentuating the positive?

Question 9—What are some of the methods by which you instill your work ethic into the program?

Question 10—Any final thoughts?

Once again, I connected this final interview to the eight main themes that have been taken from the process of this dissertation. Each theme was looked at through the lens of the final comments of the focal person of the study, Coach A.
**Passion.** The passion of Coach A has been linked to motivation, inspiration, and his eloquence. In answering the first question, Coach A described how he inspires someone:

Inspiring, to me, is tied in with motivation. And I think motivation is something that . . . is more of an attitude for a person. I think to inspire someone is to do something or to say something that enters that person’s sphere. Hits home . . . you don’t hear that often. If somebody says, “something really hit home to me,” . . . when you hear that comment made. I think to pry something out of someone or have them realize something about himself or herself, that’s a positive thing. That’s kind of inspirational a little bit because I always pictured it’s in that person, but we get caught up in the humdrum of everyday life and sometimes we don’t realize it, you know? In the classroom, there’s a kid who’s sitting there going . . . you know, he has potential. He’s just not reaching it, not getting it. And sometimes you hear a student come back years later and tell a teacher, “you know, you really inspired me to do something.” Or, “you really inspired me to think about this or read this,” you know? That capability was within that person, just an inspiration gives them a chance to realize it.

During the interview, I mentioned to Coach A that one participant had described him as “calculating.” He attributed this impression to being a passionate, driven person. “Oh, well let’s go back to calculating. Yeah, I’m kind of driven to do a very good job at things. I do. I have this . . . maybe that’s what people were talking about,” he suggested. “I am. I’m driven to . . . I want to do a very good job at things. I’ve always had that.”
He also expressed his hope that this characteristic was not rooted purely in competitiveness.

I hope it’s not . . . maybe when I was young it was competitive. You know what I’m saying? Maybe at that age I was competitive. I’m driven, you know? But I think that has melded into, no, I want to do a quality job.

Coach A also talked about the long working relationships he has had with many of his assistant coaches, which he attributes to a shared passion for the work amongst the coaching staff:

I think they like doing it. . . . They like being in the program, I think. It certainly isn’t the money, you know? It’s a Catholic school. They don’t get paid a hell of a whole lot. I think they like it. A number of them are teachers here. I think they like being involved with the coaches. And some of them have graduated from here, which is a great source of coaching. You know, some guys played here and played in college and wanted to keep doing it.

**Humility.** There are a couple of excellent examples of Coach A’s humility in this last interview. The first has to do with his longevity at the school, even though his great success has brought many offers to move up in the coaching world. “I just was honest with myself. I didn’t get some weird ego idea that I’m going to do it,” he shared about considering coaching at the college level. After much reflection and prayer, he ultimately decided that CHS was where he wanted to be. “No, this is what I wanted to do,” he said.
I mean, it’s really important that people do a really heavy soul search and ask what is it that God wants me to do, you know? Maybe ask that question. What is it that, really, God wants me to do?

The second example of Coach A’s humility revealed through the second interview involves the emphasis he places on selflessness within the team culture. As Coach A explained, this is a critical element in building character:

Kids are born with talent . . . I don’t think they’re born with character. They’ve got to learn that, you know? And when you have a team situation, character is extremely important. The idea of being unselfish. The idea of just celebrating the team success, whether that individual’s name’s in the paper or not. It doesn’t matter. To be able to get a human being to think that way develops character and it’s long-reaching. And so when you have selfish people on a team, something’s going to happen that’s not good. And it becomes a detriment. All of us can think back, oh, there were some talented teams that didn’t live up to their expectation because something got in the road. You know, somebody wanted to . . . and a lot of times it’s just sometimes little selfish things.

**Work ethic.** As mentioned before, Coach A is adamant that work ethic is the most important aspect of success and that young people need to be encouraged and taught how to develop a great work ethic.

Human beings need goals. You find a common interest with everybody. And you hope each individual realizes there’s little things they can do each day to get better. I think once you get that going, it’s pretty good. How often do you get . . .
a parent going, “if my son would try as hard in English as he does in . . . “ whatever sport or whatever the kid’s doing . . . , “he would get an A.” Well, maybe he (would not) get an A, but he’d do a lot better, obviously. See what I’m saying? And I think it’s important that a young person . . . student . . . has some experience like that in something, whether it’s in sports, whether it’s in some club . . . drama . . . whatever it could be. Because then they start realizing what a work ethic can be and if you really put your time in, look what could happen. I think that blends into a lot of things they learn in life.

When Coach A was providing his reasons as to why he would alter a plan, he mentioned the amount of work he and his staff would put into such an endeavor. He discussed how constant offseason diligence is necessary to keep the coaches and team prepared for any and all adjustments that their opponents would make.

I think there’s several factors that could do that (make me change a plan). Something just doesn’t live up to expectation. Or it was good . . . I put it in the past tense. This was good for a while, but other teams, they research too, you know . . . And if this is something that’s successful, the other team’s going to try to find a way to stop it or react to it. It’s the chess match idea, you know? So you got to make your next move. And I think that’s an important ability, to adjust as one sees the need to do it.

When asked how he might implement such a new plan, Coach A added the following: First of all, I think as a group of coaches you analyze, okay, what is causing the problem? This did work and now it’s being stopped. What’s causing that?
Because usually that dictates what your next adjustment would be. Okay, they’ve changed their secondary approach to this pass pattern. Well that should open something else up if we . . . now let’s think this through, right? . . . It’s always that play and counterplay, or whatever, happening. And I think a coach has to stay on the cutting edge of that.

A final comment Coach A made in regard to the importance of work ethic involved his strong belief that a coach must serve as a model to the players with respect to the level of work he expects from his team. Such behavior has a ripple effect, according to Coach A. “Number one is by example,” he insisted:

I’ve always believed that if kids see the coach putting extra time in, kids kind of are attracted to that. I don’t mind kids seeing me carrying the bell dummies out to the field or hooking things up. Tell the players to do that. Sure they might help me, but I don’t mind doing that. I’m always the last one out of the locker room after a game because I’m carrying . . . , “who’s shoes are these?” (laughing) “Someone left their shoulder pads.” I’m always the last guy out doing that because, one, I don’t like leaving a messy locker room. Two, that equipment’s expensive. (laughing) But also it’s like, no, I’m making sure . . . , “oh, it’s mine, coach.” Okay, alright. I don’t yell at them. “You forgot this, alright.” I think kids see that and, you know, that was coach going the extra step to help us, you know? I think kids get attached to that. If the coach cares then they care, you know? I think if you look at that and be willing to spend the time, you know, a little extra time to do that, I think that rubs off.
Positive. As has already been established through examples from the data, Coach A is a very positive person. In his final interview, he expressed how he remains positive, but also shows the purpose of what the team (or class) is doing on that day or at that moment. The following are a few examples of that positive nature and purpose. First, Coach A describes how goals can be used as a positive way of getting young men motivated and helping them to realize a sense of purpose in their daily activities. As Coach A notes, football offers plenty of possibilities for goal-setting:

Now how to take that group and inspire them to reach higher. Setting the goal. Human beings need goals. There’s no doubt about it. I don’t know if any other species set goals. (laughing) I really don’t. But human beings need them. There’s the league championship. Or there’s the playoffs. Or there’s the state championship. It’s something that, hey, we’re good, but we’ve got to be better. There’s always got to be that feeling. And there’s always something we can get better at. I constantly try to do that. . . . to get back maybe to the idea that there’s a common interest in football and teaching the techniques. You hope kids get into that. Hopefully they understand that.

Second, Coach A truly believes that if his players and students understand the purpose and intent behind an activity, they will work harder to successfully master the skills being taught:

When I explain a technique to a kid, I think it’s very important that the kid understand the whole concept of what’s happening on the field. So if you’re working with a defensive tackle and his world is the small little two gap situation.
Well, if he doesn’t understand what his job does for the rest of the team, I don’t know if he really values it. I think there’s a need to explain the whole concept, “thus if you do this in this gap on this defense, notice what the linebackers are able to do. And notice that the secondary can adjust because you’ve done this.” And if a kid pictures that whole concept, I think you get a lot more energy from that person offensively. “Hey, tight end, you’re dragging across the middle working your way to nine yards,” or something like that. You say that to a kid. Well, he’s like, “yeah, but I’m just going to go across the middle.” Well no, you have to work your way to nine yards because someone else is running a pattern that is at a different level, and if you skew that then we’ve got a problem.

He went on to relate this same concept to his English class:

Let’s go to a really vivid example: grammar. I mean, it’s almost like a curse word at times, you know? And I start pretty early with, “okay, fellas, you read texts (text messages) lately?” Misspellings and all that. Well that’s okay, the message has gotten across. Well, wait a minute. Let’s talk about miscommunication. Let’s talk about clarity. Let’s talk about just that whole idea of getting your idea across effectively . . . the ability to word yourselves so that the reader understands clearly what you’re talking about, and effectively. I go over that because I think it’s important. . . . You understand how to put sentences effectively together . . . look at your overall presentation now. And it’s good to be creative, but creative people know the building blocks of how to get there too, right? A great artist knows how to blend his paints and certain stroke methods to create the whole
picture so it all adds up. And I think that adds up in science. I think that adds up in math. I think that adds up in English.

Coach A also maintains that a positive attitude is instrumental to the successes of students and athletes. He expressed his concern that there is a danger to the current curriculum in schools because students do not always come to the understanding of the purpose for teaching certain subjects, which might result in students not developing the positive attitude that stems from having an understanding of purpose.

Curriculum in schools nowadays is so many subjects . . . and we approach it with the idea that we present almost a smorgasbord in front of a kid. And somehow, along the way, he’s got to find something that really clicks for him. Well there’s a double-edged sword in that because sometimes there’s a lot of stuff that he’s going, “I don’t know why I’m taking this. I don’t like it.” You know? And does that sour his or her attitude towards the rest of education? I mean, honestly, I remember being a student myself and I’m taking geometry or trigonometry or something and I’m like, “why am I doing this?” You know? I’m given twenty problems to do. What does this have to do with my life? And sometimes that’s hard. And it sours the person a bit. And then they go to college and they find a major and they get kind of excited about their major and suddenly the grades are better. It just . . . it’s an attitude.

Coach A also connected positivity to work ethic, and insisted that teachers ought not accept the “frustrated effort” from a student, which he sees as more of a negative that
getting a C, for example. According to Coach A, if a C grade is the best that can be achieved through a true, sincere effort, then that C should be viewed in a positive light:

I would hope a teacher would sense the kid’s effort and not accept the frustrated effort. To me, the frustrated effort is, oh, I’m not good at this. I’m just doing something and handing it in just to hand it in because I’m not good at it. No no no no, take that back and let’s try it again. Let’s do it. Come on. And then maybe it’s still not great but you can see the effort in it. I think if the kid sees that if he or she develops a good work ethic towards something they’ll be able to work issues out and then they’ll find their niche in something. Sometimes a C in a grade is a good grade. I think we’ve lost sense of that a little bit . . . if it’s a good C that’s going to have benefits in the future. But unfortunately, Mom and Dad may be mad because it’s a C. But maybe that kid really had to work hard to get that C, you know? But I hate the idea that, well, he worked so hard, you should give him a B or an A. Now wait a minute, no. But that was a hard-working C that kid just got, you know? I think a kid learns a work ethic, there’s some sort of post-high school . . . whether its college or junior college . . . that kid could go to. And personally, I think college is all work ethic. I think if you have a good work ethic in college, you’ll be fine.

Similarly, in football, according to Coach A, it is important to respond positively to the sincere efforts of those players that lack a natural talent for the sport. “I think we see this in football. You’d see a kid that, okay, God didn’t make him 6’5, 290 pounds, but the kid is just a hard-working guy,” he explained.
He works and he’s going to help you. He’s going to make some plays. Ohio State’s not going to recruit him, but you know, he makes plays because he just doggedly works at it. So I think that’s very valuable.

A final enlightening comment that Coach A made with regard to this theme of positivity is also connected to his humility. Coach A revealed the fact that, while he places such great importance on expressing to others the positive attributes he sees in their efforts and behavior, he doesn’t think about his own positive or negative attributes as a coach. “Oh, I don’t know. I don’t think about them. I really don’t. I mean there’s always things you want to work on. I don’t know. I don’t dwell on it a whole lot.”

**Integrity.** Much of Coach A’s integrity is steeped in his commitment to his school, profession, and team. He has been offered multiple jobs at the highest levels of football (Notre Dame, Ohio State), but his heart is in teaching high school English and coaching high school football. His integrity is also evident in his honesty. He believes in forthrightness, but not at the expense of a person’s self-esteem, and places great value on constructive, tactful criticism:

I think that just to turn to someone and be honest, without being blunt or rude, is appreciated, you know? I mean, being discreet if there’s something that you really need to talk privately with someone. I think that’s important. I mean other people don’t have to be around if there’s something that you’ve got to point out to someone, “hey, this is not right. I want to tell you that.” No, it’s not other people’s business. I think that’s, hopefully, appreciated. I never pictured myself
being . . . demanding that way. . . . But I think you do someone a disservice by not saying, “hey, you know, this isn’t the way we’re going to do this.”

Present. Coach A’s presence can be seen in the interest he expresses in his students’ decisions. For example, when young high school players seek his counsel as they make decisions about focusing on one sport, Coach A is attentive and present in offering his advice:

Oh, that happens all the time and here’s what I do. I don’t like them doing that ninth grade year. I really don’t. You know, a kid played freshman football and then, you know, okay, he played this and did that. “Oh coach, I’m going to concentrate on football.” I say, “I don’t think it’s a good idea.” I say, “I think after sophomore year. You’ve been two years into football.” . . . I sit down with every sophomore and junior. It’s hard for me to do that with freshman because I don’t practice with them every day. They’re across the street. I meet with them as a group, but I meet individually with every sophomore and junior that are coming back. And I’ll go, “this is where you’re at. This is what you’ve got to work on.” And there are kids that I’ve got to say to, “you know, I’m not sure football is where you should be. I’m a little concerned about, you know, on the next level you could get hurt.” You know, “you’ve got to look at this, kid. I mean, I think you have to. You’re not the biggest guy in the world and on that level I can’t tell the opponent not to hit you and I’m a little worried.”
Coach A’s great honesty with his players is revealed through being present, through his focused, calm, and reflective responses to their daily questions and interactions. He uses the same reflective nature in school meetings.

I spend time thinking things through. Like there could be a meeting going on and, “oh, maybe we should do this. Maybe we should do that.” And a lot of times I sit there for a while and there’s talk and people talking . . . I just sit there for a while. And then at some point I go, “okay, why don’t we do this.” You know what I mean? And I think people kind of go, that’s what he does.

As Coach A observed, this style of being present is somewhat different from the way in which many people handle similar situations. “People will say, ‘but this, but this!’ And I’m kind of the one that says, ‘okay, let’s put it together now.’”

**Empowering.** Coach A strongly believes that people need to feel their own successes in order to continue on the past to greater achievement. According to Coach A, a coach can help this happen by empowering and trusting others to succeed. In empowering others to do a task, this places ownership of the success on the individual, rather than the coach, and leads to a desire to work harder and achieve more. “Hopefully you help counsel them into a position where they can have success, because people need to feel successful at this,” he insisted. “If it’s not going well for them, it’s hard. If a person starts feeling success within it, usually there’s an eagerness to keep going.”

As previously mentioned, Coach A’s empowering style is particularly evident in the trusting relationship he has with his assistant coaches. In the second interview, he described what he looks for when he selects coaches for his staff. He explained,
You know, I think I have a tendency to call that person if I think they feel comfortable. I envision them being a people person, you know? And a person that you can trust. That kind of motivates me to do it.

To Coach A, a potential coach’s attitude and personality is more important than skill in the sport. “I mean, they may go, ‘well, I’ve never thought about coaching that.’ Or, ‘I haven’t coached that position,’” he noted.

“That’s okay, you’ll learn that. We’ll work together on it.” A lot of times I end up going to that position and kind of monitoring it for a year and working, and then that person kind of takes it more over.

Unique. A revealing statement that Coach A made in the second interview about his classroom activities serves as an excellent way to very simply reinforce his uniqueness, and that is that he views his role as football coach as secondary to his role as a teacher. “I don’t talk football in my English class,” he stated very simply, but firmly, “I don’t.”

Summary

The data of this project was rather copious including 13 interviews and one focus group with people surrounding the main focal subject of the dissertation, plus two interviews with the focal subject himself, totaling over 200 pages of transcripts, which revealed many interesting things about the subject, Coach A. Through all of this data, Coach A was found to have a great passion for teaching and coaching young men. The data showed him to have great humility, never taking credit for the success of the team, but rather giving all credit to the assistant coaches and players. Coach A was shown to
have a tireless work ethic that all around him greatly admire and try to emulate.

Additionally, the results of this study have found Coach A to be extremely positive in his approach to showing his followers the purpose of daily activities and their necessity in the successes of the group. Coach A always maintains high-level of integrity, for both himself and the program, as the findings have shown. He is also present in the moment during all of his personal interactions, making himself available for all who need his help or counsel. He empowers his assistant coaches and players by trusting them to do the right thing. The data from this study have shown Coach A, considered one of the best coaches in Ohio, to be a truly unique, transformational leader.
CHAPTER V
ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The purpose of this chapter is to further discuss and more closely analyze the data produced by this research project. My analysis reviewed at each of the eight themes that emerged from the data, showing examples from the data that describe Coach A and his leadership style. Finally, using the data, this chapter linked each theme to transformational leadership.

Themes

Passion

Many participants in this study used the word “passion” to describe how Coach A lives his life, and how he interacts with his students, players, and in fact, everyone. Describing Coach A in the classroom, FP1 recalled, “He was just very passionate about all the stories that we went over.” He went on to offer an example of this passion, describing Coach A’s use of quotes from literature:

Every day, he would have a new quote from one of the books that we were reading . . . One I remember, in particular, was from Shakespeare. It was from *Julius Caesar.* And he had it up there. It was, “cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war.” And so I remember him talking about how, you know, you might just look at it and scoff it off, but he goes into deep detail about . . . you know, about how intense it is and how it affected the moment in the story and things like that. And
he just is very passionate about what he does and you could tell he really cares about it.

This former player remembered how intense Coach A was in the classroom, which clearly also carried out onto the football field. The fact that Coach A is passionate, and that his passion is seen and felt by those around him, is critical to the successes he has had. A powerful illustration of the greatness of Coach A’s passion is the fact other coaches take notice of it as well, which is the testament of a true transformational leader.

For example, the baseball coach noticed how Coach A’s passion serves to inspire others:

I think he truly loves CHS and loves the kids. I would say he is very passionate. He is a very passionate person. He loves the school. He . . . has a great passion for track. He has a great passion for football, obviously. And I think those are pretty good descriptors of him. I think he is an inspiration without trying to be an inspiration. I think he inspires just by going about his business. And you know, he can inspire kids, but he is certainly doing it to me as a coach and a colleague. But . . . I think that he is inspirational even to (all people) . . . and I think other people that work here would say the same thing. They are inspired by him.

Coach A’s passion leads to the motivation and inspiration of many others in his sphere of influence, the most important of which are his players, of course. The players had many comments about how Coach A has inspired them. “One of the most inspirational men in my whole life,” one player said. “I would put him up there with my father. Just the way he goes about his business and, you know, what he expects out of you and how well he just inspires his players to work and succeed.” Another player
attributes his level of dedication to Coach A. “I would say that, if it wasn’t for him, I probably wouldn’t have been as dedicated to anything in my life,” he concluded. “Just like I’ve said that he’s so dedicated himself that it makes you want to be dedicated too, and he pushes you to be your best at all times. So that’s what I love about him. He’s a great guy.” The theme of passion was pervasive throughout my focus group session with the players and they were obviously inspired by this level of devotion and enthusiasm to reach for goals that they never thought possible.

Coach A’s passion is also revealed through his eloquence. His epic locker room speeches from years past were mentioned with great affection by many interview participants and have even been recorded and uploaded on YouTube. “He doesn’t use a script when he talks . . . I don’t care where it is,” observed AFC2, noting how impressive this is to witness.

If he’s giving an award or he’s receiving an award. He’s a very good extemporaneous speaker. He’ll have a little card and maybe have two notes on it and he’ll go from there. And in the locker room, it’s all, man, right from here (pointing to his heart) . . . from here to here (heart to mouth). And the kids are just ready to go.

The ability to speak well is critical to transformational leadership. Conger and Benjamin (1999) wrote on the five “competencies” that, if learned, would help to develop transformational leadership, and one of them was the communication skill for developing a vision. Coach A’s ability to inspire others with his words has allowed him to successfully communicate his own passion and vision to those around him, which has the
effect if making others passionate as well. As Conger and Benjamin related, Coach A has communicated with his great oratory skills an appealing future state, which all have joined him in trying to achieve. As one player shared:

I just remember a speech before the first playoff game. And each pregame speech, you know, it’s like just five minutes of him just pacing around. It’s dead silent in the locker room. You could hear a pin drop. And he’s just pacing back and forth. And he says, “Men, bring it up.” And we all take a knee in front of him. And I just remember him repeating over and over again, saying, “November is our month. We don’t put the pads away in November.” And then I also recall before the state championship game, he was saying how . . . you know, it wasn’t really just a motivational speech before the state championship game . . . it was just kind of like a realization, saying, like, “the first time any of you ever picked up a football, guess what you were getting ready for?” And he was just talking about that night and that moment, and just to love every moment of that game.

Interestingly, although Coach A recognizes that speech is a powerful tool, he did not focus on this ability as much as the other participants when discussing the subject of motivating his players. Coach A believes that a person who plays football does so because of a great love and passion for the game, and encourages his players to be selfless, team-players.

I often tell players, “I’m the head coach. There’s 22 positions every time a ballgame begins on a football field. And the right guard position, to me, is just as important as the quarterback.” That’s the way I have to look at it. Now the
quarterback coach really wants a quarterback. But for me, I’ve got to fill these positions and I’m always looking. . . . You may be better off at this position over here. You’ve got to be open to grow. You know, I try to do it that way because some kids come in, “oh, I want to play defense.” “Well, you may be the starting center, though, and I think you’re better at that. I really do. I think you ought to try it.” I think I’m trying to do that every week, at least two times a week, maybe three.

According to Coach A, a truly motivated player will play whatever position will help the team succeed. He emphasized the idea that a positive, selfless attitude is what leads to greater achievements, such as state championships. Coach A’s desire for others to be selfless and motivated to do what it takes to make the team a success is reinforced most effectively by his own selflessness and dedication to CHS and his football team.

I have no (desire to go coach elsewhere) . . . I’m coaching at Catholic High School. When I’m done with that, I’m finished. There’s no something . . . I’m trying to build my resume so I’m moving someplace else. I’m not building any resume. This is what I’m doing, so it’s very student athlete-oriented. It’s enjoying that part of it. So I want to be as fair as possible. I want to be focused on these are the young people we’re working with. We’re going to help them become the best they can be mentally, physically and spiritually. That’s really important . . . all three of those. That’s the mantra.

His “mantra” of preparing student-athletes mentally, spiritually, and physically is what makes Coach A the passionate man he is and also what makes him the transformational
leader he is. Passion and transformational leadership go hand in hand. As Bass and Riggio (2006) observed, “transformational leaders behave in ways that motivate and inspire those around them by providing meaning and challenge to their followers’ work” (p. 6). The data from this study has demonstrated that Coach A is such a leader, as the passion he displays truly motivates those around him.

**Humility**

Humility is an extremely important element of successful leadership, but also one of the most difficult to possess and to maintain. Throughout his long career, Coach A had demonstrated his humility on a daily basis, as seen through his spirituality and selflessness. The data from this study revealed that Coach A is a transformational leader because of his humble, “God and others first” nature. As P1 observed:

The word that comes to mind when I think of him is he’s humble. He’s a regular guy. And whether it’s him teaching English or as the head football coach of Catholic High School, he doesn’t speak with arrogance, as I would expect for somebody who has had as much positive scores and whatnot. And people respect him and there’s a reverence. I mean, when you see the boys, there’s a reverence there. And so you would think that that would eventually get to him. And I don’t see that at all. He’s very matter-of-fact. He’s very black and white.

P1 went on to discuss how she was not aware of any negatives of Coach A, but if there were, she insisted that he would be the first to admit them.

I’m sure there are things, but I think he’d be the first one to tell you what they are. And the fact that I can’t tell you isn’t because it’s not there or because I can’t say
that the man does anything wrong, it’s just I don’t have that close of a
relationship. But I think if you asked him, he’d tell you plenty. I have no doubt
about that . . . So that would be the thing. I don’t see him as god-like. I don’t
think he can do no wrong. I do think he’s a good man. And I do think he is worth
my son’s time to see what a good man, other than his father, is about. . . . It’s kind
of nice for (my son) to see you can be successful, you can be in the newspapers.
You can have books written about you, But you’re still a man, you still go home.
You still are the husband. You still are the dad. You’re human . . . put it all in
perspective.

P1 seems to have really given this some thought. She is strong in her belief of who
Coach A is and what a strong, positive influence he has been for her son.

The players agreed on the subject of Coach A’s humility and selflessness. One
player pointed out the fact that it is not just the football team whom Coach A cares about,
but rather the entire CHS community, past and present. “I see that, with Coach A, it’s not
only football players that he’s helping out, but like (my teammate) said, any student in his
class, he’s there for,” the player observed.

I notice this program . . . he doesn’t want it to be about him and himself. He
wants to get all the alumni back. A lot of this . . . it motivates me just for all the
guys who came before us who also played for Coach A and what they battled
through and everything.

A transformational leader gets the kind of follower response that is being
described here. Bass and Riggio (2006) suggested that transformational leaders gain trust
of their followers through selfless acts and humility, which includes fair treatment of the followers, integrity and dedication. Self-sacrificial behaviors build follower trust and this humility, and show a leader’s dedication (Conger & Kanungo, 1998). Coach A, through his consistent humility even after achieving great successes and accolades, has gained a level respect and admiration from his entire community, which in turn has inspired these people to not only work their hardest and perform their best for him, but to emulate his humility and selflessness. The assistant principal was particularly impressed with the fact that Coach A chose to stay at CHS when he was offered the opportunity to move on to seemingly “better jobs:”

I will never forget when he was getting so successful. You know, you hear these other schools . . . colleges courting him . . . Michigan, Ohio State . . . Notre Dame. And it’s like, you said what? He said no. He likes it here. Oh wow, c’mon! Where do you see that? I mean this day and age? He loves the classroom. He couldn’t teach. He loves to teach.

When others are aware of such humility, particularly from such a highly successful individual, they become more willing to go that extra mile for him.

Coach A considers himself an “English teacher who coaches.” He considers his spirituality the most elemental part of himself that he can share with his players. According to Coach A, it’s God’s wish for each person to use his talents to the maximum potential. “If one is spiritual, it would make sense that God gave you some talents. Some guys are a little bigger and faster, but he gave you what you have,” Coach A explained.

“Now what’s the best thing you can do? It is to take those talents and take them to the
highest degree of competency you can.” He goes on to express his fundamental belief that this is most pleasing to God, saying,

I think that’s a wonderful prayer, to be honest with you. I mean, we say wonderful prayers, but what’s a great prayer to God is, “you’ve given me this, and I’m doing the best I can with it.” I think that’s a wonderful prayer to God.

Bass and Riggio (2006) commented that faith motivates the followers, and Coach A’s spirituality motivates others to achieve their best. The moral strictness and standards placed on people by parents and mentors raise their expectations, and in turn, raise their performance (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This is a part of transformational leadership. Turner, Barling, Epitropaki, Butcher, and Milner (2002) stated that leaders with high levels of moral reasoning tend to be more transformational. Coach A’s strong faith and spirituality was particularly evident in his response to the question, “what virtue do you consider to be the most important?”

I would say . . . how about this . . . mercy. Because if one says the Our Father, the only request that is made of us in the Our Father is, “as we forgive those who trespass against us.” That’s the only request in the Lord’s Prayer that we have to do something. The rest of the Lord’s Prayer is asking God to help us. Now mercy blends into a lot of different things. Forgiven . . . so mercy meaning forgiveness, right? Human beings can offend other human beings and not even notice. By words, by actions, you know? A lot of it not really intended. And the need is to get beyond that and not worry about it.
Throughout his many years of coaching and teaching, the humility of Coach A’s actions and words have led hundreds if not thousands of students and players to follow him and do great things. This is an important component found in transformational leadership, according to Bass and Riggio (2006). Humility, self-sacrifice (selflessness), and a spiritual nature can lead to leaders gaining follower trust, and also lead to high satisfaction of followers and high productivity of the organization (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Additionally, Keyes, Hanley-Maxwell, and Capper (1999) offered a list of what comprises spiritual leadership:

1. Valuing the personal struggles of all followers.
2. Recognizing the dignity of all people.
3. An ability to reconcile the personal and professional aspects of life.
4. A belief that in general, people are doing their best, and may simply need support, training, etc., to achieve more.
5. Listening skills.
6. The capacity and ability to dream.

The data from this study provide numerous examples of Coach A demonstrating these characteristics. He views all players and students equally. He sees no difference between any position or any player on his team with regard to their importance to its success. He is a teacher and a coach who works for all of his followers to achieve their best in what they are doing. He listens to their needs and attends to them. And finally, he sees a vision of greatness as a result of all of this. The connection between spirituality and transformational leadership (Hinds, 2005) comes directly from the interpersonal
relationships and common beliefs that strong spirituality can create. Being humble and thinking of others first only adds to the transformational leader’s ability to win over followers and influence positive outcomes.

**Work Ethic**

The most important aspect of a successful football team, according to Coach A, is the work ethic that the team displays throughout the entire year. As the data from this study reveal, Coach A’s emphasis on the importance of work ethic has had a profound effect on the players. “I know I have a coach that’s going to go to bat for me every single day,” one player declared. “If I’m giving a 110%, I know he’s going to give a 125 just to see me succeed and see all of us succeed. That’s why. And he fires me up every day,” he added. Another player said the following about Coach A’s work ethic and how it affects his own way of thinking:

> When you see him do as much work as he does here . . . teaching for six hours a day, coming out to practice, coaching track in the spring. He’s here right now in the summer coaching, you know, younger guys that are in the eighth grade. And just when you see the amount of commitment he puts into this school, it’s kind of like why can’t I commit myself to classwork? Or why can’t I commit myself to, you know, doing this particular assignment on the field? When you watch Coach A and, you know, he just handles these commitments day after day after day, and does them to the best of his abilities.

Such a statement from a player shows his confidence and trust in the leader. Elkins and Keller (2003) wrote that this confidence and trust strengthens the followers’ identification
with the leader, and this close identification to the leader leads to the follower being committed to performance goals and outcomes. Thus, this is evidence linking Coach A’s work ethic to transformational leadership. The message of work ethic leading to success is one that Coach A has clearly instilled in his players and is constantly reinforced. As another player described, Coach A teaches his players that work ethic is the key to their ultimate goal:

To be state champions. I think we can relate that to anything that we do here. You know, if it’s working out at 6am. If it’s going to our running sessions at 7:30. You know, in our weight room, we have three big boards that say “Be State Champions,” and we realize that there’s a lot more to just saying that because that’s the number one goal going into any season. He always says that, “your goal is to be the best at what you do.” And so he wants our program to be the best. And if we work as hard as we can, we can accomplish our goals.

The players also see and appreciate the fact that Coach A is highly organized. One player described how knowing the organization of football practices, and keeping some consistency, helps him to improve as a player:

Coach A always tells us what the game plan is. That’s something I’ve always particularly enjoyed, is Coach A always tells us what the plan is and what, exactly, we’re trying to get out of the day. And then we go do it. And every step from there on out . . . individual period, a group period, a team period . . . everything has its purpose and its own little way to help teach a player to get better and eventually get better as a team.
A high level of organization is a critical part of transformational leadership. The leader must prepare others by being prepared himself. AFC2 mentioned the “mantra” of physical, mental, and spiritual preparedness in describing how Coach A organizes and runs his practices, providing for a very important period of reflection.

He makes sure that they are physically, mentally, and spiritually prepared for every contest. And he preaches that to the kids. And he makes sure that they think about what they’ve done at the end of each practice. We have a period called “ten seconds” where, when he’s through making his announcement or making his little talk about whatever the subject is, whether it’s a Thursday and the next day’s pregame Friday and he’s kind of wrapping up where we are and where we should be . . . every day, after every practice, he wants you to think about what you did at practice today and how you’re going to get better tomorrow. And he stops everybody and you have ten seconds to think about that before he dismisses us.

Coach A is a workhorse, and prepares for each day, whether it be teaching or coaching. He makes it his personal goal that he will work his hardest to help others succeed. He does not see himself in the capacity of leader through this hard work; he simply expects it of himself and does his daily chores. He sees it as far more important to create the structure of the lesson and practice, so that the student or athlete can maximize their time, and therefore maximize their potential. “A leader’s job is to give structure to what the goal is for whatever venture it is,” Coach A insists. “It could be in business. It’s trying to win football games. Trying to become the best discus thrower you can. (A
leader) provides structure.” Coach A links this structure to the preparedness that he expects of his entire program:

The game is on Saturday night. Here we are Monday. Here’s how the structure goes and how we prepare. Let’s get a vision of what problems the opponent’s going to present to us. Let’s prepare in how to react to that. Okay, so you’re hunting your opponent. You’re preparing. . . . then physically getting out there. It’s nice to draw diagrams on a chalkboard, but getting out there and trying to do it.

Coach A also strongly believes in the power of student work ethic in helping students overcome individual learning challenges:

The struggling student. I always look at it that if that kid, even though he’s not that gifted . . . I mean, he has issues with whatever. I mean some kids just get it. They have photographic memories and they can handle things. And there’s a kid that just doesn’t have that. If that kid can develop a work ethic, that kid will be fine. I’m convinced of that.

Ultimately, Coach A goes back to his mantra for the best way to summarize the importance of teaching preparedness and work ethic. “I’ll go back to the idea of the mantra. I would hope that a young man would learn that if he prepares mentally, physically and spiritually for any challenge in life, he’ll be well prepared,” he summarized, noting that the football is only a tool for life-preparedness. “And that’s all he can do. It’s just a football game.”
Through work ethic, structure and organization, preparedness and adaptability, Coach A displays many characteristics that define transformational leadership. Avioli and Bass (1994) demonstrated that an organizational culture where the leader worked with others instead of them working for him created a transformational leadership situation where there was a high level of satisfaction and a high level of productivity. Brown and Treviño (2009) reported that several studies confirmed that a hard working leader creates a transformational situation where desired organizational outcomes (happy followers, high productivity) happen. Coach A’s example of great work ethic, high organization and structure, complete preparedness, and adaptability, are an irreplaceable component of successful teaching and coaching.

Positive

The data from this study have shown Coach A to be a positive leader, which is a somewhat unique quality for a football coach. His positive attitude and the way he tries to identify the purpose in all the things he does and teaches in a classroom and football setting has been shown to be a trademark characteristic of this successful individual. The basketball coach discussed Coach A’s positive attitude in describing how he gets the team back to focus in the offseason:

The kids are committed to start working as soon as they’re able to and allowed to by our state laws, you know, with the athletic rules and that. And I just think he has a way of getting kids . . . especially the few years we haven’t gone as far as they would hope, I mean, they’re right back in with it and they’re excited about the opportunities and the possibilities. And I think Coach A brings that positive
energy to the program. When things were a little shaky and a little rocky, he still steers the ship and keeps it afloat and keeps it positive.

No matter what the end of the season brought, a loss, or a state title, Coach A is able to get the team focused on the task at hand, and all through a positive, purposeful approach. Parent 3 observed that it is in the little things that he is most positive and impressive: “He is always complimentary of my son. Always. Always. He knows who the parents are. Always has something good to say about my son, whether it is in the classroom or on the football field.” These small gestures go a long way in helping to make Coach A a successful transformational leader.

In regard to dealing with the players, Coach A is seen as a person who teaches, interacts, and disciplines in a positive way. FP1 stated that he often recalls Coach A when he thinks of the CHS motto. “I think his vision is just to make us all just better people in general, in terms of discipline, in terms of adhering to the whole CHS motto, which is “men for others,” he stated. “And I think his goal is not to just win football games, but to really make all the people on the team just good guys.” It is this focus on self-improvement and individual progress that makes Coach A’s positive approach so effective with young men. “Coach is a very positive guy,” FP2 observed.

He is a ‘build you up’ kind of a guy as opposed to a ‘break you down’ kind of a guy. And I think he is like that with every player. I can’t think of one instance in particular, but I suspect that he has helped a lot of people just because of that attitude.
FP2 went on to describe Coach A as very encouraging. “He’s not a get in your face and yell at you and tell you to do something kind of guy,” he observed. When asked to give an example of an instance when Coach A encouraged him as a player, FP2 recalled,

Well it’s like if you’re doing sprints and you have that guy who will bark at you, you know what I mean? Who’s just mean. He’s more of a let’s get this done to get better, you know? He’ll say, “we’ve got, like, two more,” and remind you of the goal.

The words of one of Coach A’s current players speak to how his positivity leads to a response from his players that renders his leadership truly transformational:

He’s talking about the amount of potential that we all have. I mean, he congratulates you. Like, you do something right or we make a big achievement and we get something done, he’s the first one to congratulate us. But that doesn’t mean that he’s ever satisfied. And he’s kind of passed that on to all of us. I mean, he’s always looking for us to get better no matter when. No matter how far we’ve gotten. No matter if it’s week three of the playoffs, because he sees all that we could be.

According to this player, Coach A has his finger on the pulse of the team and he is always keeping them positively focused on the task of collectively getting better. When a leader’s empathy towards his followers and his ability to contain their emotions and unite their work through positive reinforcement, Kets de Vries (1994) called it transference. The statement above shows that this particular player has completely bought into the idea of getting better, because Coach A has transferred the positive thought of achievement to
him. Having such an effect on others is the essence of transformational leadership. The followers have ownership of getting collectively better. Jung and Sosik (2002) wrote that such collective work leads to a collective sense of efficacy.

In describing his positive approach to coaching, Coach A insists that he wants football to be a fun experience, so he tries to maintain a positive, even humorous attitude and demeanor while interacting with his players and coaches:

Well, games are fun, and that’s kind of where you’re headed each week, in preparation for that. Practice is hard work, but . . . while you’re working hard, it doesn’t mean you can’t have a little sense of humor at some point. Because we’re human, you know? Something happens and just, instead of yelling and screaming and losing it, maybe sometimes it’s just a little quip . . . going, “well . . .” (laughing). I think everybody on the field goes, “yeah, that didn’t look very good” (laughing). You know, okay, what? Are we going to yell or are we going to . . . “come on, I think we can do that better.”

As previously mentioned, Coach A is also very focused on the players understanding the purpose of the things they are doing (drills, practice, talks) and he wants the players to not only have that understanding, but focus their thoughts and energy on it. This is one of his most dominant attributes. In providing a sense of purpose, he insists, “I think it’s important for kids to feel that. That the reason the coach is giving the structure or putting a demand here a bit is trying to help us to become better. Good environment. Good environment.” Coach A sets aside time to focus on the purpose, at
the beginning of each practice, for example. “We gather a little bit just for like two
minutes and I talk to the whole team,” he explained.

Usually it is contributing to structure, “alright, there will be a couple of key things
we’re working on today. A couple of things the opponent is showing in film. We
have to get ready for this.” Just little things like that. Takes two minutes.
These brief, focusing talks not only help the players understand the purpose of the day’s
events, but also bring him closer to his players. Many coaches teach the lessons, but do
not share the purpose of the lessons. Coach A believes very strongly in the paramount
importance of players understanding the purpose of practice:

There’s a purpose of being out there every day. I think a kid has to realize that
there’s a purpose. There’s a purpose to this 15 minute period. There’s a purpose
to this drill. There’s a purpose to this conditioning. It all adds up. I think that’s
the most important thing in practice. Practice shouldn’t be, “can’t wait ‘til it’s
over!” (laughing) “Okay, we only have another half hour you guys!” You know,
that’s not good. I think it’s very important that the coach has a drill and the kid
sees there’s a purpose to this drill. “Hey, we got to get better at this certain thing.
We’re going to work at it. It ties into what we’re doing here.” I think then they
get into the drill more.

Perhaps the best thing Coach A does to positively bring purpose and thought to
the day’s events is in a period of reflection that he refers to as “ten seconds.”

Every day I finish practice by just simply saying, “okay, ten seconds.” . . . Before
I blow the whistle and they leave the field and they go, they get ten seconds to
think about . . . each individual . . . okay, what are you going to do in the next 24 hours? Something today that you’ve got to work on. Whatever it was. Something just didn’t go right. Alright, make a mental point that tomorrow I’m going to get that done. And I always tell them, “now look, if every individual out here just gets that one thing done tomorrow, we’re a lot better, aren’t we?” And the kids kind of realize, yeah, it’s not just going out there spending two hours just waiting to go home. And you feel that in the classroom sometimes too. Come on, we’re not just here for 45 minutes just to wait for the next 45 minutes to go. Come on, let’s find something . . . And I think that needs to be reminded constantly.

Coach A also connected the use of positive reinforcement to making the sometimes necessary negative responses and criticism more effective. As Coach A explains, to follow-up criticism with positive reinforcement can help push a players performance to a higher level:

I think the idea of certainly celebrating something that’s good is important, that we react with appropriate praise, you know? Good praise. I’ll use football. If a player makes a mistake and you let him know it, I think it’s important for a coach to keep that in the back of his mind and soon after that to find something positive that the kid does, okay? Okay, he screwed up big time on a certain play and the coach is going to, you know, maybe react pretty strongly. Okay, for that to have effect then pretty soon there better be, ‘that’s it! Good job! That’s the way. That was really good!’ . . . If you tear down, make sure you build back up, because if you build back up, usually it goes beyond what it originally was.
The idea of positive reinforcement is not new, but Coach A’s use of it and his focus on emphasizing the purpose of the daily efforts of the student-athlete are truly unique. In leading in this manner, he is helping to create a group of focused and forward thinking and moving individuals. Sims and Lorenzi (1992) called such thinking cognitive-focused strategies. They believed that leaders needed to teach the followers to build in natural rewards into their tasks. Coach A says that these “built in” rewards are “getting better” as an individual and as a team. Geijsel, Sleegers, Leithwood, and Jantzi (2003) wrote that three dimensions of leadership (vision building, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration) were most important to creating a transformational leadership model. These three dimensions are clearly present in Coach A’s positive and purposeful approach. He creates the day’s vision in his two minute meetings before a practice. He stimulates the players intellectually with his “ten seconds” of reflection. All of this is done with carefully crafted, positive reinforcement.

**Integrity**

Bass and Riggio (2006) wrote that transformational leaders gain follower trust through their extremely high level of integrity. Coach A meets this criterion without question, as AFC1 observed: “I especially admire his forthrightness and his confidence in doing what’s right, you know, without hesitation.” The baseball coach was particularly appreciative of Coach A’s high level of honesty.

I think he is reserved until his opinion needs to be made. I think he does a very good job of listening and then reacting. . . . But he doesn’t pull any punches either. When he reacts, he tells it how it is and I have a lot of respect for
somebody that doesn’t pull any punches and that, you know, hits you right between the eyes.

Coach A has the respect of his fellow football coaches, his fellow head coaches of other sports, but most especially, as a transformational leader, he has the great and undying respect of his players. His integrity and honesty shines through in every aspect of his being and he has won over the hearts, minds and spirits of his entire organization. One of his players put it best:

The big part about Coach A is that you have to be a man for others 24/7, not when you feel good or when you want to, or if its’, like, the big week . . . He’s the man for others. He does all the work for us every week, you know, most of the year. Everyday. So . . . it’s like a challenge to us. We have to be that all the time, especially when we’re tired or mad or we’re just frustrated about something. We always have to be that man for others. And he calls us to do the right thing all the time, not just some of the time.

Coach A himself admits to mistakes and makes no excuses, holding himself to the same standards to which he holds others. “You’re responsible for other people. Okay, you make a mistake,” he explained. “You live with it and let’s get back to work!” Admitting when he is wrong is a great indicator of a high level of integrity, but perhaps the most telling sign of Coach A’s integrity was when he was offered the chance to go coach at Notre Dame. I asked him to share this story with me, to which he replied:

Oh, alright. I’ll preface this by saying anytime Lou Holtz . . . say we’re at the same banquet or something . . . I introduced him a couple of times. He’ll always
say, “I offered him a job!” You know, just kind of busting my . . . (laughing).

And it was like, well no, come on. Very simply, I think it was 1990 or something like that . . . 1989. I was teaching and I come down to the office and the secretary says, “hey, Lou Holtz called. He wants to talk to you.” Well, I’m thinking, okay, he wants to talk about a kid that we have or something like that, you know, that’s coming up who’s pretty good or something. I’m not thinking anything else.

Well, but it’s directly to Lou Holtz, not some assistant. Well, that’s okay. So I call. “Hey, Coach Holtz, hi.” You know, blah blah blah. And he goes, “well no, I really want to talk about you.” “Oh, well, alright.” He goes, “well, you know, we have an opening and I’m trying to get some names and, you know, I like putting some high school guys on the list and would you like to interview?”

And I’m sitting there like, I mean, one minute ago I had never thought about that in my life! You know? (laughing) “Huh?” You know, it’s like, “well, coach, I’ve never thought about this. I mean, I never thought about college, to be honest with you. I’m teaching English and I’m doing high school and I never even thought about it.” And he was really nice about it. “Well listen, I’m going to give you the phone number of Coach . . . “ . . . I forget who it was . . . Moore or somebody . . . somebody who had been an assistant coach for him. “Why don’t you give him a call and just talk to him for a while about what being an assistant in college means and stuff like that?” “Well, okay, thank you, Lou. I appreciate that and I will.”

So I did. I called the guy and we talked. And about two minutes or three minutes into the conversation, I realized I wasn’t that . . . I think football wise, I
could have done it. But the guy was very honest. He goes, “you know, it’s a business. It’s big business.” And he goes, “be prepared to move your family eight to ten times. And as soon as you say this, you should be shooting to be a coordinator and then a head coach, because being an assistant college coach, the money’s okay, but for the amount of hours you put in, you should set a goal to go and go. And you’ve got to realize it’s a business. It’s multi-million dollar businesses that you’re dealing with.”

Anyway, he was very realistic about it and just a few minutes in, I thought, you know what? I never really set out to do that. I don’t want to get talked out of what I wanted to do. I think I wanted to teach and I wanted to coach. Could I have made more money? . . . There was a possibility, in retrospect, that I would have made more money, but would I have been happy? Would my family have been happy? I would tell you, if you asked that of my kids they would probably say, “well, if Dad really wanted to do that.” You know? But it would have been really hard to move around. And that’s not fair to them.

Few others, if given the opportunity, could say they would do the same thing as Coach A in this situation. Coach A is indeed a man of integrity, which makes him a transformational leader. Humphreys and Einstein (2003) wrote that transformational leaders operate out of a deeply held value system that includes things like justice and integrity. Burns (1978) referred to these as “end values.” Burns believed that a transformational leader can not only unite their followers, but also help to change their
overall values, goals and beliefs. As this study has shown, Coach A has been doing that for over 30 years at Catholic High School to great success.

**Present**

To be present is a quality that not only endears a person to others, but it also makes one stand out among peers. As the participants in this study observed repeatedly, Coach A is present to his fellow teachers, coaches, students, athletes, and most especially his God. Coach A lives a life for others by being focused on the moment, calm in all situations, reflective in his decision making, concerned for those around him, and caring in his actions. All of these behaviors contribute to his being a transformational leader because they allow him to profoundly impact the lives of others in a positive way. The data from this study have shown that Coach A’s presence means different things to different individuals. For example, AFC1 indicated that Coach A gives you space to take control of situations on your own, but is always there when you need him, and always honest:

> With (Coach A), well, you know what he feels. You know, he doesn’t pull any punches in that sense. I mean, he’s a pretty straightforward guy. And he’s a guy who likes to encourage you to take action, and then he’ll put his input in if he disagrees. But for the most part, he turns things over to you. At the same time, he’s very open to giving you counsel and advice and suggestions and things like that at the same time.

Parent 2 identified Coach A’s presence as having that personal touch. “He knows me by name. He knows all my kids. He remembers them all,” she explained. “It’s just
awesome to me that he can remember that, you know, with as many students as he’s had through. He will tell you that he’s a teacher before he’s a coach. And my sons will say that’s true.” The ability of a teacher and coach to be consistently present and acknowledge students, players, and parents by name goes a long way in establishing trust and respect within the community.

To the players, Coach A’s presence manifests itself in his calm and focused demeanor. One player recalled a time in a big game when a lot of coaches would tend to panic, that Coach A was focused, calm and reflective:

In the 2011 playoffs . . . about midway through the third quarter, we’re down seventeen to three, and some guys are starting to get, you know, a little worried. We’re having trouble putting points on the board. You know, there’s Coach A, pacing back and forth, headset on, not saying anything. Just staying focused. And I think that’s just kind of how his demeanor is. Never once have I seen him showing any doubt. It doesn’t matter what point you are in the game, he’s always focused. And you know, like I said, just pacing back and forth. He knows exactly what his plan is. And he’s always right, because we wound up winning that game 20 to 17, on a game-winning field goal.

The concern and care of Coach A was best described by the one player interviewed who had quit the team (PWLT). When asked to describe how Coach A reacted to him quitting the team, PWLT responded, “his reaction? Nothing, really. He just said, ‘good luck with whatever you’re going to do.’ Or, you know, I think he would welcome me back if I wanted to.” Many coaches would not treat the young man the same way.
Coach A describes his own presence as being open, and never dismissive. “I try to be open and try to be friendly,” he explained.

By open, I mean I want people to feel at ease talking to me. And I think that opens up conversation. I think it’s trying to be available and open . . . that idea.

If there’s something you want to talk about, let’s talk about it and not brush it off with some, “oh yeah, yeah, we’ll get to that.” I mean, just, “okay, let’s talk. This is where I see it.” . . . that seems to be a kind of important thing.

Coach A does not differentiate from a simple question or a serious one. All students, athletes, parents, coaches, teachers, colleagues, and administrators are met with the same presence.

This truly caring, and present, nature helps to define Coach A as a transformational leader. Bass and Riggio (2006) discussed how true transformational leaders make the individual feel a part of the larger entity, thus allowing that person to share in the good (successes) and the bad (stresses) collectively, thereby reducing the grief load and adding to the happiness. Roush and Atwater (1992) found that transformational leaders were more highly rated by subordinates when the leader was one of sensitivity and feeling. Coach A is a man of sensitivity and feeling in the rough and tumble world of football by being present to all around him, focusing on the event, or the individual, at hand, being calm in the most difficult of situations, reflecting on choices before acting, and of course, being caring and concerned about others.
Empowering

Coach A’s ability to empower others was mentioned frequently by the participants in this study. The concept of empowerment in leadership has been the subject of intense study in recent years. The willingness of leaders to allocate trust and power to followers is a very important aspect of transformational leadership theory. It is one of Coach A’s best attributes, as the basketball coach observed in noting that he leads by example, instruction, and expectation:

I think his leadership style... I guess I would define it as him telling you what his expectations were of you and then letting you go through the paces or go through the steps with him giving you the support that he felt you would need. He leads by example. What he asks of his players and of his assistant coaches he’ll do no less. He’ll do even more. So I think he sets that example and he shows you what needs to be done to have things done the right way. And I think he expects that from his players... that same kind of commitment.

Leaders who empower others lead by example as well as instruct. To be empowered by a leader, it is crucial that the follower believe in the leader. The leader must make the follower feel good about the contribution he is making.

Trust and confidence are also vital components to empowerment. As the comments of AFC2 indicate, Coach A’s trust of his assistant coaches has the effect of making them feel good about the work they are doing for the team. “He’s always made me feel like I was an important part of this whole operation,” AFC2 remarked.
There have been times throughout the tenure where I’ve had some personal issues that he’s let me work through and has still maintained confidence in what we do. He doesn’t micromanage. He certainly does not micromanage. You know, he’s not coaching every position out there. He’s not telling you how to coach. You know, you’re doing your own thing . . . until he thinks that it’s totally against what he believes in, or it’s not working and you haven’t seen it . . . that it’s not working.

It seems Coach A believes strongly in the capabilities and commitment of his assistants and players, and steps in only when absolutely necessary. This is the epitome of an empowering leader. Coach A’s empowering leadership strategies are also noticed by his fellow teachers, as FT1 observed:

You know, all the years my husband coached with him on the varsity level, any time they won and (Coach A) had an interview, the first thing he would get in the interview was, “well you know, I’ve got to give credit to my offensive coordinator,” or my, you know, defensive line coach or whatever. He is always trying to give everyone else credit. And when you think about what a leader does, that is what you want to do. You want to make everyone else feel empowered. That’s what I think is important.

Giving credit to others is critical to empowering them, and also critical to transformational leadership. Followers become empowered when they see their leader display humility when he has a chance for glory. Parents also notice the selfless,
empowering leadership of Coach A. “I watch him on the sidelines and he’s kind of hands off,” P1 commented.

He really allows those coaches to make the plays . . . when he goes up and down the sidelines, he’s expecting something to happen, which usually does. But you know, you always hear that’s a good sign of leadership to delegate and I think . . . he has confidence in those guys. You know, play calling and all that stuff, he really allows those assistant coaches to do it.

Perhaps the most telling example of Coach A’s ability to empower came from the assistant principal, who attributed his becoming a teacher to Coach A’s empowering nature:

He threw me *Moby Dick* as a student and said, “You are going to read this.” And I said, “(Coach A), no way. Look at the size of this thing.” (He said), “You didn’t pick one out, now I’m pickin’ it for you.” I’m like, “but, but . . .” (He said), “It’s like an onion, peel it back.” Well I became an English teacher because of that.

Coach A personally describes his empowering nature by explaining how he steps aside and lets his younger coaches take the lead with the varsity players while he works with the younger JV players who are coming up through the ranks:

I work a lot with the secondary, okay. But I have a young guy who I kind of brought along. So at a certain point, okay, go ahead and I’ll run the scout sophomore defense versus the varsity, let’s say. And so I’m right there with the sophomores. And here’s the head coach and you’re sitting there going, “hey alright now let’s do this. This is what the other team does but we’re going to do
some stunts.” And we’ll use our terminology, alright? And I’m out there and a kid makes . . . a little sophomore makes a play and I go, “alright!” And so the kid’s like, “yeah, the head coach is with us!” You know? “Nick (assistant coach), go ahead. Call the plays. You’re guess is as good as mine. Go ahead. We have a call sheet. Go ahead.” You know, so I want to make sure I’m seeing and working with as many of those youngsters as I can.

Coach A also indicated that he likes to empower his high-level assistants to do their jobs without hesitation, to show them he trusts them. “I trust him and I think he’s always appreciated that,” Coach A said of his long-time offensive coordinator.

He’s a guy that always likes to tinker a little more. You know, he’s very interested in that, which is a great quality, you know? There’s always a way of getting it done better. . . . I think I’ve encouraged that. But I think he appreciates that I trust him. I want him to coach.

Finally, Coach A connects empowerment with him being a “people-person:”

I think I’m a pretty good people person. I think I make a group at ease. And I think I help make a group get focused on trying to get better. You know, I think I do a pretty good job of that. I think I try not to be a dictator or something like that. I try to be a leader that helps blend people together to work together. I always picture George Washington having that ability. I’ve always pictured Abraham Lincoln having that ability. . . . that people that have maybe conflicting personalities can work together. So I think that’s, maybe, what I do pretty well.
As Bass and Riggio (2006) observed, “it is the transformational leader who fosters empowered followers” (p. 202). In an athletic study, Doherty and Danylchuck (1996) discovered that coaches’ job satisfaction, perceived leadership effectiveness, and extra effort were positively related to transformational leadership behaviors of athletic directors, who empowered these coaches. Howard and Wellins (1994) described empowering leaders by using terms that identify with transformational leadership: visionary, inspirational, supportive, championing, facilitative, and inspirationally considerate. It is not surprising that Coach A fits those descriptors as well.

**Unique**

Perhaps the most important aspect of this study is that there is a unique individual whose behavior, beliefs, and characteristics have been the primary focus. No individual will be able to replicate Coach A by studying him, reading this dissertation, or even following him directly for several years. He is completely unique, but it is through studying him that aspiring young teachers and coaches might observe the characteristics that make him who he is, and work towards incorporating these qualities into their own behaviors. It is this possibility of transference that has motivated this project. This transference possibility is one method that will enable new, aspiring coaches to get better.

The individuals who are most equipped to describe the uniqueness of Coach A are his players. These young men are the lifeblood of the team and the driving force to its success. Coach A, in his unique way, has helped them to achieve great things. Coach A is “one of a kind,” one player concluded.
He definitely . . . out of all the coaches I’ve had, he finds a way to inspire his players like no one I’ve ever seen before. And how he does that without being . . . mean about it or, like, snarling or yelling at people. He does it in such a calm way and every time he speaks, everybody just wants to listen and hear what he has to say.

Another player discussed Coach A’s level of devotion to CHS and his vocation as a teacher and a coach, which is rooted in the Jesuit tradition:

He went to CHS and then he went to John Carroll, so I feel like he’s gotten lot of this ‘educating the whole person’ from there. And he’s really adopted it. And I mean, you can listen to your teachers say that or Jesuits say that, but you’re looking at a man who’s devoted his whole life to educating the whole person. That’s all he’s ever done. I mean, he came right out of college. Came here, started teaching, started coaching, and that’s been his vision from the get go. He found a way to reach kids through football and through teaching and he’s taken two-thirds of his entire life to teaching and educating the whole person. Making us men for others. Making us good men.

Another player provided a personal anecdote that speaks to Coach A unique abilities as an educator, coach, and leader. “I got kicked out of his summer school class for fighting,” the student revealed:

Interviewer: So how did that go? How did he treat you? What happened?
Player: He was like, ‘hey, big guy, calm down there.’ And I was like, ‘no, no.’ I forget what the fight was about. It was dumb. But he was like, ‘um, you go outside. You know, chill out.’

Interviewer: Didn’t raise his voice?

Player: No.

Interviewer: Didn’t get angry?

Player: Never, no.

Interviewer: No threats?

Player: I was kind of like the big dummy that was yelling and screaming. And he was like, ‘okay.’

Interviewer: How did that make you feel?

Player: I was like, why is he not talking like I am or why is he not angry like I am?

Interviewer: And what do you think of that kind of a reaction?

Player: In retrospect, it was kind of unique. You rarely see that.

As this player would tell you if you asked him, Coach A took an angry young man and simply made him a man. Coach A addressed his uniqueness in his own words, saying, “I think my leadership style fits my personality. And I would advise any young coach to do it that way. If you’re not Vince Lombardi, don’t try to be Vince Lombardi.”

Bass and Riggio (2006) discussed the relationship of personality and transformational leadership. Coach A has an undeniable, positive, and unique personality. I contend that uniqueness is a part of transformational leadership in that each
person is different, and there cannot be one set transformational leader, but several slightly different ones that share similar characteristics. Coach A has the sociability that Bass and Riggio (2006) described as critical to being a successful transformational leader, but he is also quiet at times. He has the ascendency that all great leaders need, but he is humble too. Coach A has all the self-confidence and self-efficacy needed to raise others to his level, but he also empowers them to work to their highest level. Coach A takes risks, but he shows self-control and purpose in doing so. Most importantly, Coach A has fun coaching, which shows all of his followers that football is a game and they should be having fun too, or why are they playing? Bass and Riggio’s (2006) personality traits fit Coach A’s description, and possessing these traits in his own unique way makes him a transformational leader.

One final comment from Coach A that demonstrates his uniqueness came after the interview was finished, but the tape recorder was still on. I told him that he could change any comment he wanted to after he read the transcript. “I think we’ve been very honest about it. I don’t have any reason to worry about what you’re writing, to be honest with you. You’re going to write what you want to write. I don’t have any problem about that,” he stated with confidence and resolve. Coach A is unique in that he truly believes in the man he is. I am not sure how many other people on this planet can look into a mirror and make such a statement.

**Summary**

The data from this research project have shown that Coach A displays several attributes, all of which add up to him being a transformational leader. His passion for
teaching, coaching, and life inspire those around him. He has great humility, and always puts others first. These behaviors elicit great respect and admiration from others, who consequently aspire to emulate him. He is always positive. He works hard at his job. He has integrity and does what he says, leading by example. He is present to his student athletes. He empowers his fellow coaches and all of the players to take ownership of what they are doing. All of this makes him a very unique, transformational leader.
CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The process of completing this dissertation has taught me that true transformational leadership comes from the persistence and hard work found in individuals like Coach A. His work and example have changed some of the ways I think about coaching and life itself. This final chapter served to synchronize the findings of my study. I addressed the research questions originally posed in Chapter III and relate these to the themes discovered within the data. This final chapter discussed the implications of this research to my life and the lives of others. I gave recommendations for future research and reflected on how this process has impacted me and my life. This has been quite a journey.

Overview of Findings

The findings of this study are important for many reasons. First, they have revealed eight clear attributes that make a truly great leader. These are characteristics on which individuals striving to become better leaders can focus to improve their leadership skills. Second, the findings of this study disclose behaviors and actions that an individual might do in order to emulate this successful person. Third, this research study offers an excellent example of a transformational leader, for those who want to learn more about this type of leadership.

The eight attributes (themes) that were identified in this study reveal what qualities a great leader should have. A great leader should have passion for his endeavor,
no matter what it is. This will motivate and inspire others and help them become better. It does not hurt if the transformational leader is a powerful and charismatic speaker as well.

Great leaders should be **humble**. While some great leaders may not attain the level of humility of Coach A, this was shown to be an important attribute in the finding of this study. Coach A’s selfless, spiritual, and humble attitude helped him win many people over, making him truly transformational, and was key to his success in creating a unified vision for his team.

A great leader should have a tireless **work ethic**, and create a structured and organized atmosphere for the organization to exist in. He should always be prepared and also be able to adapt to the changes that confront him and his organization.

A great leader should be very **positive** all the time, no matter what. Being perceived by others as a consistently positive thinking individual goes a long way towards achieving team goals. A great leader should show the purpose and meaning behind the daily grinding activities.

The **integrity** of a great leader should never be questioned. This also comes from the consistency of the leader in all things and him being accountable for his own actions. Integrity is also revealed through one’s honesty and fairness at all times.

A great leader does not only have a great presence, he is **present** to his followers. He is there through thick and thin. He is focused, calm, and reflective in tough situations. He is concerned for the well-being of his followers. A great leader is truly caring and shows genuine concern for others.
A great leader has the ability to empower others, and believes in the effectiveness of empowering others rather than doing everything himself. He trusts his followers to become leaders themselves and will support them in their efforts to achieve this.

A great leader will have all of these characteristics and be unique, just like Coach A. However, and this is of utmost importance, he must always maintain his own identity.

**Relating the Themes to the Research Questions**

“Transformational leaders help followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to individual followers’ needs by empowering them and by aligning the objectives and goals of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organization” (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 202). Bass (1985, 1998) also wrote that followers exceed expected goals through transformational leadership. Furthermore, followers show high levels of satisfaction and commitment to the group and organization because of transformational leadership. In recent scholarship, transformational leadership has been shown to be important in every sector and in every setting (Avolio & Yammarino, 2002). Leadership must address the followers’ sense of self-worth, and transformational leadership does so.

Bass and Riggio (2006) wrote that transformational leaders motivate others to do more than they intended or thought possible because they set challenging expectations. These leaders have more satisfied followers because they empower them and pay attention to their personal needs. This helps the followers develop their own leadership potential. It is this growth of the follower that is evidence that the leader is a transformational leader. What follows is a discussion of each sub-question.
Question 1—What are the Daily Practices of a Successful Football Coach?

Coach A brings a certain passion to his daily efforts. He is humble in calling himself a teacher first. He works hard daily to ensure student learning and daily football growth. He is always positive with his students and team, giving them a sense of self-pride and the ability to reach for higher goals. He demonstrates a high level of integrity by being up-front and honest at all times with all people he encounters. He is present to his students, players, and co-workers. He is always focused, calm, and reflective under pressure. He is caring and concerned about others before himself. He empowers his students, players, and especially fellow coaches to take charge of their own situations and trusts them to do so. Coach A is unique in having all of these attributes, but seems like just a regular guy to whom people can relate.

Coach A’s daily habits reveal him to be a transformational leader. He helps his followers grow and develop. His actions are constantly geared towards the purpose of mentally, physically, and spiritually preparing the young men he leads to become “men for others.” He is attentive to their needs. He empowers them to achieve more. The overall organization is reaching higher goals because of this leadership through his positive daily habits.

Question 2—How is This Successful Coach Perceived by His Peers?

Coach A is perceived as an eloquent, inspirational leader who has legendary pre-game speeches. He is seen as a person of great humility and spirituality. Coach A is seen as a man who is not afraid to get his own hands dirty and is always prepared. He is also seen as a man who gives a purpose to all that the team is doing and is very positive in
motivating them to do it. Coach A is viewed as an honest and fair man who will tell you where you stand and will look you in the eye and shake your hand while doing it. He is viewed as a caring man who is always there when you need him. He empowers others to take responsibility and is seen as a person who trusts others. Coach A is seen as a one-of-a-kind guy.

Because followers in the transformational leadership definition are highly satisfied, these followers seem to fit that definition. They see such a positive man in Coach A that he has to be a transformational leader. They are very satisfied.

**Question 3—What is the Espoused Vision of This Successful Football Coach and How Does He Communicate That Vision?**

Coach A has great passion for his professions of teaching and coaching. It is this passion that motivates and inspires others to see what he sees, great potential in all people to achieve great things. Coach A is humble and his vision of success includes a high level of selfless on the part of himself and his followers, where all members of his organization give up their personal needs to realize the vision of the entire group. Coach A works hard to see the vision into reality through structured lessons and organized practices. The work ethic also rubs off on those around him. Coach A is always positive. He shows the purpose to what the group is doing, and makes it clear that getting better on a daily basis is a goal in itself and a huge part of realizing the over-all vision of the organization. Coach A’s integrity is never questioned, which makes others admire him. His mere presence enhances a situation and he sees through the trouble of a tough situation with a sense of calmness that others see and wish to emulate. Coach A trusts
others to do their jobs in the daily events that lead towards achieving a goal or vision. Coach A puts all of these attributes together in a unique fashion that create an infectious atmosphere where all members of his organization see his vision because they are living his vision, which they share.

Question 4—How Does This Successful Coach Empower Others Toward That Vision?

All of the efforts and expectations of Coach A serves to raise the expectations of all around him and they achieve things that they may have never thought possible. Before he became the head coach at Catholic High School, they had not won a playoff game as a football program. Since he has been coach, they have won 11 state championships. They now expect to achieve this level of success. It is a part of their vision. All of this is due to the leadership of this remarkable transformational leader.

Link to Theoretical Framework

Constructivism

This study’s methodology was appropriate for constructivism. It “delves into the minds and meaning-making, sense-making activities of the several knowers involved” (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, p. 40.). The subject of the dissertation, Coach A, was analyzed by interviewing the people who surrounded his daily activities. It was their perceptions that constructed their own understanding of who Coach A was and is and what kind of leader he has become. This understanding that the participants had of Coach A was deciphered and presented through themes that emerged from the data. From the participants’ understanding of Coach A (and his own self-awareness) I constructed the
meaning of what his coaching and leadership style was all about. Thus, constructivism was utilized in learning about the leadership style that defines Coach A

**Meaning-Making**

Drath and Palus (1994) said that meaning-making in a community of practice defines leadership as a “social meaning-making process that takes place as a result of activity or work in a group” (p. 13), instead of individuals getting together to work. A football team is a great example of group work. Each player does have an individual assignment, but if the group does not have a vision, and a shared meaning of what they are doing and trying to accomplish, then the team will not succeed. Coach A was and is an expert in creating such a vision, thus creating meaning for his entire community (school, football team). His program practices in unison of this vision and meaning, and they succeed because of it.

**Transformational Leadership**

The presentation of data in this chapter has shown that the words and actions of Coach A demonstrate that he is a transformational leader. Bass (1985) said that transformational leadership involves leaders stimulating and inspiring followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes, and also become leaders themselves. Coach A has done this. His student-athletes are winning at a very high percentage, against top competition, and they are doing so by leading each other, because Coach A had empowered them to do so. All of the assistant coaches feel value, take ownership for their actions, and produce great results with the players. Coach A is a transformational leader because he addresses “the follower’s sense of self-worth to engage the follower in true commitment and
involvement in the effort at hand” (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 4). In fact, Coach A meets the description of all four of the components of transformational leadership that Bass and Riggio laid out: idealized influence; inspirational motivation; intellectual stimulation; and individualized consideration.

**Idealized influence.** Idealized influence specifically refers to the degree in which a leader serves as a role model for his followers. Coach A has been shown to fit this qualification to a great degree through his strong work ethic, positive outlook, integrity and presence. These characteristics make Coach A’s followers want to emulate the leader because they admire, respect and trust him. Avolio, Bass, and Jung (1997) wrote that the transformational leader “emphasizes the importance of having a collective sense of mission” and “reassures others that the obstacles will be overcome” (p. 4). Coach A has been shown to fit this description through the data presented in Chapter IV, as demonstrated in the themes of passion, positive, and empowering. Coach A also meets the idealized influence standard of transformational leadership through his willingness to take calculated and consistent risks. When his followers observed the positive outcomes of this calculated risk-taking behavior, they want to emulate Coach A for the betterment of the group.

**Inspirational motivation.** Inspirational motivation emerges from the transformational leader’s past experiences, which have made him a person who is admired or respected. Inspirational motivation is also enhanced by the leader creating a shared vision that inspires all participants to achieve. Coach A meets the criteria of a transformational leader here by “providing meaning and challenge to their follower’s
work” (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 4). This has been demonstrated in the data from this study particularly through the themes of his passion and positive outlook. Coach A has been shown to be a master of raising team spirit and enthusiasm. He lives on the side of optimism, and as Avolio et al. (1997) have written about the transformational leader, he “articulates a compelling vision of the future” (p. 4). Coach A wants his team to be state champions, for example, so he inspires and expresses that vision to all of his followers, which motivates them to achieve that goal.

**Intellectual stimulation.** With intellectual stimulation, the transformational leader helps the followers think about their old problems in a new way. This activity leads to the use of reasoning and evidence to solve problems. In doing this, the transformational leader is not only looking to stimulate the intelligence of his followers, but he is also looking to be stimulated intellectually by them in return. The data from this study has shown Coach A to exhibit this standard of a transformational leadership through the themes of hard work and integrity, in particular. Coach A places great emphasis on his own self-improvement, and well as the continued growth of his coaching staff and his team, through hard work and by staying abreast of the latest developments in the game of football. That is the essence of this criterion of intellectual stimulation in transformational leadership. Coach A encourages creativity while never publicly humiliating a player or coach for making a mistake, providing a safe and positive environment for growth and improvement to take place. Additionally, through his empowering nature, Coach A encourages his followers to fully participate in solving
whatever problem they are faced with, which also relates to the intellectual stimulation standard of a transformational leader.

**Individualized consideration.** Perhaps the component of transformational leadership that Coach A best exemplifies is individualized consideration. Avolio et al. (1997) described this as paying special attention to individual follower’s needs for achievement and growth. The data presented have shown Coach A to exhibit individualized consideration through his ability to empower others and his ability to make himself present to others. Individualized consideration permits the follower to have a sense of social identification because they feel pride in being a part of the group. Consequently, followers come to view their individual efforts and work roles as a contribution to a larger collective cause (Wang et al., 2005). Coach A mentors and guides others towards the successes that he feels they are capable of, which are usually much higher than the follower thought possible. This sort of individual consideration is what makes Coach A so successful and respected. Ultimately, he is respected precisely because he respects the capabilities of others and helps them to maximize their potential.

**Implications to Practice**

The implications and recommendations from this study are geared towards those who may be on a track to become a head coach, or may already be a head coach. The positive and effective attributes identified in this research study demonstrate that Coach A is worth emulating. It is my recommendation that coaches interested in developing their skills and improving their success rates would benefit from trying to replicate Coach
A’s conduct, and developing some of the daily habits described in this dissertation. Eight themes from this dissertation can be operationalized into daily work habits:

1. Passion—Coach A worked and coached with passion. Every coach should have great passion for the sport in which they coach. It will be reflected by the players and coaches around you.

2. Humility—Coach A does not exhibit a desire to get or take credit for his team’s successes. Other coaches would benefit from this level of humility and selflessness, as such behavior allows others to take ownership and develop individualized pride in the achievements that resulted from their dedication and hard work.

3. Work Ethic—Coach A works tirelessly, sometimes doing the jobs that no one else wants to do. He cleans the equipment and is always the last one out of the locker room on away games. Every coach would benefit from emulating such a strong work ethic, as it sets a powerful example for the entire team.

4. Positive—Coach A is always positive. This does not mean that he does not find fault in things, but it does mean that he corrects things in a positive way, and is quick to build back up those who have been corrected. Every coach should make such an effort to maintain a positive attitude, as it will keep those around him in the same frame of mind.

5. Integrity—Coach A’s integrity is without question. He consistently exhibits high moral standards and practices great fairness with those around him.
Integrity and fairness are important qualities for any coach, as they lead to increased respect by players, coaches, and the community as a whole.

6. Present—Coach A works at this. He is present to all of those he interacts with. To be present is to let others know they are important and that you are there to support them. A coach who is present for others, especially those in need, will be similarly appreciated and admired by his community.

7. Empowering—Coach A empowers his players and especially his coaches. He gives them not only the authority, but also the inspiration and confidence to achieve high goals. Every coach who can empower others by delegating authority and duties will nurture inspired and confident followers.

8. Unique—Coach A is definitely unique. There will never be another like him. He encourages all coaches to go about coaching with their own style and flair. Every coach will have his own uniqueness.

In addition to these attributes, which I think other coaches would benefit from emulating, I also recommend that those who want to mimic Coach A’s leadership style in order to achieve greater success might seek out additional like-minded leaders and endeavor to learn from these individuals as well. Such interaction can only lead to bettering yourself.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

A few future research possibilities stem from this project: one, a more in-depth study into the nuts and bolts of Coach A as a coach; two, a look into Coach A’s personal relationships (especially with his wife); three, a comparative study to someone who is deemed successful in the college coaching ranks.
It would be interesting and helpful to observe Coach A in action as a coach and teacher and use that information to complete a new study of coaching techniques. Just interviewing people to get a sense of how all of this comes together to create a successful coach may not be enough. Observing several practices and games and recording the activities may be another way to get a clear picture of what makes Coach A great.

Studying Coach A’s family life would be helpful to a lot of people in the profession of coaching. Many coaches struggle with juggling family life and coaching. Observing how Coach A balances his family life with his work would be an interesting and worthwhile study.

Comparing and contrasting this study with that of a highly successful college coach might also be an intriguing follow-up to this research project.

**Researcher Reflections**

It has been a pleasure to work on this research study. It has provided me with the opportunity to find out a great deal of information about a top-level coach whom I consider the best at what he does. I tried to probe into the negative aspects of this coach, but found no negative aspects coming forth. I even pushed the baseball coach and the basketball coach to talk about the negative relationships with Coach A that can stem from “sharing players” and they had no negative comments to make. I found it difficult to believe that there were absolutely zero negative comments about the coach, so I asked him directly about his positives and negatives:

Well, I think I’m a pretty good people person. I think I make a group at ease.

And I think I help make a group get focused on trying to get better. You know, I
think I do a pretty good job of that. I think I try not to be a dictator or something like that. I try to be a leader that helps blend people together to work together. I always picture George Washington having that ability. I’ve always pictured Abraham Lincoln having that ability. You know, that people that have maybe conflicting personalities can work together. So I think that’s, maybe, what I do pretty well.

Let’s see, even though I clean the locker room, my office is always piled up with stuff. (laughing) It becomes a storage room. It drives me nuts. One, we don’t have enough storage at all. I don’t know about you. You guys built a new facility. Watch out, your storage rooms are going to be filled soon with all sorts of stuff that you go what the hell is that doing here? You know, it just . . . and I go, “I can’t . . . alright, just put it in my office.” And it gets piled up.

The only negative aspect the coach could come up with in the interview is that he is messy.

This study allowed me to reflect on the way I approach my own coaching. In fact, after conducting all of the interviews, I had the best season of my coaching career, winning the first league championship for our school in 52 years. I thought about each move I made all through the season and asked myself, “What would Coach A do?” I made a daily effort to show my true passion for football. I did not take credit for our victories, but referred reporters to the players for comments. I showed up early and stayed late to make sure the team was prepared for the next game. I was positive with my attitude and more patient with players, coaches, and parents. I maintained a high level of
integrity. I was present for the players and coaches (and sometimes the parents) and was always there to lend a shoulder to cry on or to share a laugh. I empowered the team (players and coaches) to make decisions and really affect the positive outcomes our team achieved. I do not consider myself unique, but I am a football coach. Sometimes, I even called Coach A and e-mailed him for advice, which was enormously beneficial to our football program. My mindset for the process of running a football team has improved from this process. I am definitely a better football coach today because of completing this research project, and I hope to share that wisdom with many others throughout my career.

**Summary**

Coach A is an inspirational leader whose legacy will be around long after he is gone. He is an icon to the people at Catholic High School and others throughout the profession of teaching and coaching. The fact that he is a transformational leader will be news to him. He is not focused on being any one thing, or having any trait that has been identified in this project. All he is and has been concerned with is getting up every day and being the best teacher and coach he can be. It is people like Coach A that make teaching and coaching great professions, or vocations, as Coach A would call them. When others start to look into his life and the lives of others like him, the ideas that he stands for (without really preaching them) will spread, allowing others to emulate his coaching techniques and behavior. When this happens, their schools will become led by better prepared leaders. The more that people learn about teachers and coaches like Coach A, the more prepared for positive leadership the future coaches and teachers out
there will be. As Coach A would say: “Just get a little better every day, and anything is possible!”
REFERENCES


Miller, M. M. (2006). The relationship between transformational leadership and love as choice to will the highest good using the transformational leadership.

*Transformation*, 23(1), 61.


APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
The open-ended questions for the 13 interviewees and of the focus group were as follows:

1. How long have you known the coach, and in what capacity?
2. Describe your typical interaction with him.
3. How would you define his leadership style?
4. What is a typical practice/class/meeting like when the coach is conducting it?
5. How does the coach make you feel about yourself?
6. How do you feel about him?
7. What is the coach’s “vision” (goal or dream)?
8. Do you share this vision? Why?
9. What words do you use to describe the coach?
10. Please feel free to say whatever you would like about the coach.
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL CONTINUED
Coach A First Interview Questions

Question 1—What interested you and ultimately motivated you to become a teacher and a coach?

Question 2—What about coaching, specifically football coaching, do you enjoy the most?

Question 3—Describe the kind of teacher and coach you are.

Question 4—How would you define your leadership style? What kind of leader are you?

Question 5—Describe a typical football practice.

Question 6—Do you create a vision for your team? What is it?

Question 7—How do you get a unified vision and motivate all involved to work together towards it?

Question 8—What would you want other people to know about your teaching and coaching philosophies?

Question 9—What do you feel is important about your teaching and coaching philosophies?

Question 10—What is the most essential element of coaching?

Question 11—Any final thoughts?
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL CONTINUED
Coach A Interview Two Questions

Question 1—Tell me how to inspire someone.

Question 2—What makes you change a plan (day to day, year to year), and for what reasons would you alter what you do as a coach or teacher?

Question 3—How do you get people to focus on fundamentals?

Question 4—How do you help someone succeed?

Question 5—What is the most important element to practice?

Question 6—Please put your vision for your football program into one sentence.

Question 7—What does virtue mean to you? Which virtue do you hold most dear?

Question 8—How do you teach and coach accentuating the positive?

Question 9—What are some of the methods by which you instill your work ethic into the program?

Question 10—Any final thoughts?
APPENDIX D

ADULT CONSENT FORM
CONSENT FORM
( Participant Consent)

“Transformational Leadership in Coaching and Education”

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Mr. Jeffrey L. Pharion in Ashland University’s Department of Leadership Studies in the Schar College of Education is conducting a research study to help understand how a highly successful
coach/educator, Chuck Kyle, conducts his daily business of teaching and coaching, and also how he
handles interactions with the people he deals with (student athletes, former student athletes (alumni),
parents, fellow coaches, fellow teachers, administrators). You are being asked to participate in this study
because you fit one of those descriptions.

B. PROCEDURES

If you agree to be in the study, the following will occur:

1. You will be interviewed by the researcher for a 60 -90 minute interview which contains
questions specific to the subject of the study (Chuck Kyle). This interview will be
recorded and you will remain anonymous.

2. You will be able to choose the interview space and the time, based on your availability
and the researcher’s.

C. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

1. You might not want to answer some of the questions. You will be able to reject
answering any question and will be able to stop the interview at any time with no penalty.

2. Confidentiality: Participation in research will not involve a loss of privacy; you will be
given a pseudonym and will not be identified in the study any other way. The recordings
your records will be handled by the researcher as confidentially as possible and will be
destroyed after three years of safe storage in the researcher’s office. No individual
identities will be used in any reports or publications that may result from this study.

D. BENEFITS

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, the information
that you provide may help coaching and educational professionals better understand how to lead their
respective organizations.

E. COSTS

There will be no costs to you as a result of taking part in this study.

F. QUESTIONS

You have talked to Mr. Pharion about this study and have had your questions answered. If you have further
questions, you may call him at (614)325-8891
If you have any comments or concerns about participation in this study, you should first talk with the researcher. If for some reason you do not wish to do this, you may contact the Human Subjects Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. You may reach the board office between 8:00 and 5:00, Monday through Friday, by calling or writing....

Brent Mattingly, Acting Chair
Human Subjects Review Board
Phone: (419) 289-5342
E-Mail: bmatting@ashland.edu

G. CONSENT

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. Your decision as to whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on your present or future status.

If you agree to participate, you should sign below.

__________________________________________
Date                                      Signature of Study Participant

__________________________________________
Date                                      Signature of Person Obtaining Consent
APPENDIX E

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM
CONSENT FORM
(Parental Consent)
“Transformational Leadership in Coaching and Education”

Dear __________________________:

The Department of Leadership Studies in the Schar College of Education at Ashland University supports the practice of informed consent and protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you will allow _____________________ to participate in the present study. You are free to withdraw _____________________ at any time.

Your child will be interviewed as part of a focus group or individually by the researcher in this project and asked a few questions about Chuck Kyle, English Teacher and Head Football Coach at the school. The focus group interview will last between 60 – 90 minutes. We are interested in studying the leadership style of Mr. Kyle and how he interacts with his student athletes.

Your child’s participation is solicited but strictly voluntary. We assure you that your child’s name will not in any way be associated with the research findings. The information will be identified only through a pseudonym or a code number.

If you would like additional information concerning this study before or after it is completed, or have any issues or concerns, please contact the lead researcher, Jeff Pharion by phone or mail. Thank you very much for your time, and we appreciate your interest and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey L. Pharion
Doctoral Candidate
(614)325-8891
100 West Starr Ave.
Columbus, Ohio, 43201

Dr. Judy Alston
Professor
(419)207-4983
401 College Ave.
Ashland, Ohio, 44805

****************************************************************************
I have read and understand the information about “Transformational Leadership in Coaching and Education.” I give consent for my child to participate in this study. I understand that this consent is voluntary and can be withdrawn without penalty at any time.

____________________________________
Signature of parent or legal guardian

____________________________________
Date