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The Role Affiliation Membership Plays in an FFA Chapter: A Qualitative View from Kentucky

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The Role Affiliation Membership Plays in an FFA Chapter: A Qualitative View from Kentucky

by

Jacob Falwell

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

The College of Education and Human Services

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Abstract

Research exists to demonstrate the benefits of FFA membership and the three-circle model of agriculture education. FFA membership had shown minimal growth in the 20 years following the rebranding. The innovative approach of affiliation membership has ushered in a steady growth of FFA membership, but not all chapters are participating in affiliation. FFA membership is provided to every student who is enrolled in agriculture education classes with affiliation, and the dues collection process is eliminated. This study investigated the view of affiliation membership in Kentucky High School Agriculture Education programs by researching the enrollment, involvement, and educational outcomes of affiliated programs. Interviews were conducted with eleven agriculture educators in Kentucky to identify themes among their perceptions of affiliation membership. Findings included minimal to no impact on agriculture course enrollment, but a theme developed indicating that once students were affiliated with FFA, they became involved which in turn impacted the chapter's involvement levels in both CDE/LDE and non-competitive events. Additionally, there was a theme that indicated no definitive change to instructional practices or learning outcomes, but a noticeable change in daily instruction with the removal of explanations, dues collection, and the barrier for students who were not members being able to be involved. These findings suggest further study is needed to determine if affiliation membership is found to be beneficial by all programs. This impact could vary among larger and smaller programs as well as programs that are unable to manage more students involved with a limited number of agriculture educators.

Key Words: Agricultural Education, FFA, Affiliation Membership

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Chapter I: Introduction

Since 2010, the National FFA Organization (FFA) has provided the opportunity for seamless membership to all students enrolled in agricultural education with affiliation membership (Sheehan, C. & Moore, L., 2019). This means that School Based Agricultural Education (SBAE) will include the FFA component along with Supervised Agriculture Experience (SAE) which completes the three-circle model of agriculture education (Figure 1). While individual membership in FFA has increased by 28% since 2010, rising to 850,832 students in 2022, there are several factors limiting schools from joining through affiliation (National FFA Organization [FFA], 2022d). Chapters may point to finances as a reason for not being an affiliated program, but others point to unanswered questions pertaining to benefits and involvement of all members. This study sought to examine the impact of affiliation membership in the FFA. Experienced teachers from affiliated chapters reported on the involvement of members and successes achieved, and conclusions were made based on these findings.

The Three Component Model

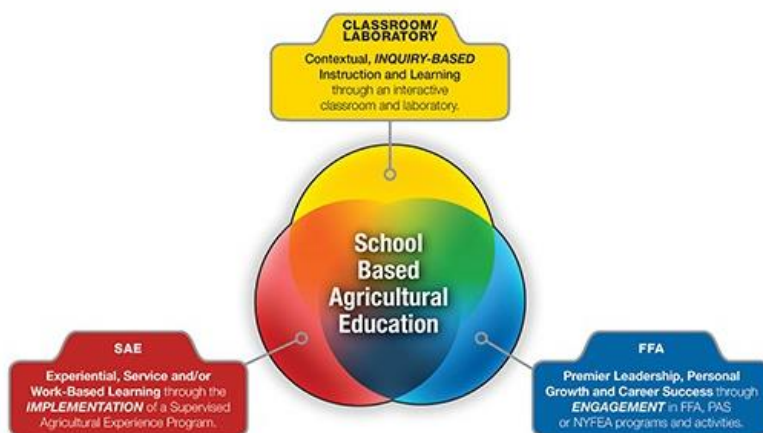


Figure 1 Three Circle Model of School Based Agricultural Education (FFA, 2022d).

The National FFA outlines the Philosophy of Program Affiliation to promote involvement, employability, workforce readiness, higher educational success, well-rounded education, and 21st Century skills (FFA, 2022b).

- 1) Involvement in FFA is an integral part of an agricultural education program serving 7th - 12th grade members and therefore should not be optional.
- 2) Participating in FFA activities helps students develop additional employability skills that cannot be duplicated at the classroom level.
- 3) Students understand the role and importance of professional associations in America's workforce.
- 4) Students receiving education through a complete agricultural education program will not only enjoy a well- rounded educational experience that leads to higher career satisfaction rates but will also experience significantly decreased drop-out rates and overall higher-grade point averages.
- 5) Students engaged in a complete school-based agricultural education program will experience a well- rounded education that leads to increased academic performance, lower dropout rates and career success.
- 6) Twenty-first-century skill development through FFA is not only for a select few but should be offered to every student in every class, every day (p. 1).

This philosophy lays the groundwork for the purposes of affiliation membership, and points to the reasons the option is being selected by chapters across the country as well as in Kentucky.

Chapters who seek affiliation membership are ensuring all students in agriculture classrooms are FFA members, thus increasing the diversity of members. Additionally, this approach should increase leadership development opportunities for all students due to their membership in the leadership development organization. Including all agriculture education students in the FFA Chapter ensures each student is receiving the complete agriculture education experience. The unknowns of affiliation include questions about the innovation of the idea and ability to implement activities for all members so that their affiliation membership is seen as worthwhile to both the student and the program. Chapters that see no noticeable benefit to affiliation membership are more apt to adjust membership types. This is the case when agriculture education students are not attracted by membership and the proposed benefits of

joining FFA while enrolled in an agriculture education course. Chapters that do not affiliate, but choose the traditional dues process save money; therefore, those chapters who see no benefit are financially drawn to leave affiliation.

Context

Kentucky FFA chapters have two options for FFA membership at the high school level. The first option is traditional dues, where a student pays the local chapter, region, state, and national dues by early November or April depending on the semester the student is enrolled in the agriculture education course (Executive Secretary, personal communication, July 5, 2022). State dues are determined each year at the state convention after recommendations by the executive committee (Kentucky Association FFA Const. art. X, §A). For the 2022-2023 school year, Kentucky dues were \$5 per member, National dues were \$7 (Executive Secretary, personal communication, July 5, 2022). Chapters that select the traditional dues method must then charge \$12 per member to recover state and national dues. Additional charges to students can include local and regional dues.

In the Purchase Region of far Western Kentucky, regional dues are set each year at a student delegate meeting based on counsel from the Kentucky Association of Agricultural Educators (KAAE) regional meeting held at the Kentucky Association of Career and Technical Educators (KACTE) Summer Conference (Purchase Region FFA Const. art. VIII, § A). During the 2022-2023 school year, Purchase Region dues were determined by the number of agriculture teachers: \$250 for single teachers and \$400 for multiple teacher programs (Regional Chair, personal communication, August 15, 2022). For a chapter that has one teacher and 50 members, this raises National, State, and regional dues to \$17 per member. Chapters with multiple teachers and 100 members see dues of \$16 per member. Chapters often collect extra money for chapter

expenses and charge \$20 or include a chapter t-shirt and potentially charge \$25 to cover costs. These traditional collection numbers allow for all membership dues to be gathered from the students to grant the student membership into every level of FFA.

The second option in Kentucky is affiliation dues, and that option must be selected by August 31 (FFA, 2022b). Once that method is selected, the chapter must adhere to the fee schedule to determine dues that can range from \$250 for 1-25 students in agriculture education to \$5,490 for up to 600 agriculture education students (Executive Secretary, personal communication, July 5, 2022). During the initial year of affiliation membership, the fee is based upon the current year enrollment in agriculture education. Subsequent years are based upon the previous year's enrollment numbers. Reported student numbers are compared with Technical Education Database System (TEDS) enrollment figures from the Kentucky Department of Education to ensure accuracy (Executive Secretary, personal communication, July 5, 2022).

Purpose of the study

This study aimed to qualitatively investigate the impact of affiliation membership among chapters in Kentucky through a series of research questions. Analysis included how affiliation membership has changed classroom enrollment, contest participation, FFA involvement, classroom instruction, and learning outcomes. By knowing these outcomes from a study, one can better measure programmatic success with a result-focused goal (Henning, G. & Roberts, D., 2016). Has affiliation membership positively impacted students and chapters? A noticeable theme in favor of affiliation would ensure the affiliation process remains available and will encourage more chapters to participate in the success. Likewise, themes indicating obstacles or hinderances would encourage a programmatic assessment to reconsider the affiliation process or the implementation at the chapter level.

Framework

Affiliation membership is a new alternative to the traditional dues gathering membership. Due to the newness of the approach and the adoption of so many chapters this study is phenomenological in nature. Phenomenological studies aim to address the experience humans encounter with a movement or trend. This research investigated interviewees' perceptions toward the new phenomenon, with flexibility in the approach to ensure the author could change course during the study if perception changes (Wiersma W., & Jurs, S., 2009). Bogden and Biklen (2003) refer to this type of research as a "Historical Organizational Case Study." This indicates that the innovative approach to dues collection, affiliation membership, can be analyzed by case studies from schools who have experienced affiliation membership.

Interviews were conducted with agriculture teachers who have experienced affiliation membership. A list of chapters in Kentucky that chose affiliation was requested from the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), Career and Technical Education (CTE) Division. This list formed the group of teachers that were sought for interviews. All interviews were conducted individually, compared to focus groups, so that themes and perceptions were authentic to each interviewee. Once interviews had been completed trends became evident and pointed to consistent successes and struggles of affiliated chapters. Perceived trends would allow National FFA and agriculture teachers to make decisions for future membership options.

The phenomenological study looks at the entirety of the affiliation choice and not just the financial decision or one specific factor; holistic approaches are suggested for such studies (Wiersma W., & Jurs, S., 2009). This study was a "multisite study" according to Wiersma and Jurs (2009), by analyzing various chapters and not the successes or challenges of only one chapter. Previous studies investigated the trend of affiliation membership, but no study analyzed

perceptions of benefits or perceptions of obstacles or hindrances from the innovative dues collection process. This study seeks to investigate this phenomenon in Kentucky and provide clarity to agriculture educators in determining if affiliation is working as the National FFA Organization suggests (FFA, 2022b).

Research questions and hypotheses

The following are research questions for this study categorized by impacted areas:

Enrollment Research Question 1: What impact has FFA affiliation membership played on agriculture course enrollment?

Involvement Research Question 1: How has Career Development Events (CDE) and Leadership Development Events (LDE) participation been impacted by FFA affiliation membership?

Involvement Research Question 2: How has FFA affiliation membership impacted FFA involvement in addition to Career Development Events (CDE) and Leadership Development Events (LDE)?

Outcome Research Question 1: How has classroom instruction changed since the beginning of FFA affiliation membership?

Outcome Research Question 2: What learning outcomes have been altered after participation in the FFA affiliation membership?

The hypothesis was that impact on involvement will be positive as students engage more easily with the fluidity between class enrollment and membership. Enrollment and outcomes within the affiliated chapters is likely to be improved due to greater competition for participation and success within FFA; and a byproduct of this outcome is classroom demand. In the end, the result could be larger agriculture education programs due to increased enrollment.

Significance of study

Funding has been a significant barrier to affiliation membership for many chapters, but with the recent influx of federal and state money to CTE, those financial restrictions are reduced. Local Area Vocational Education Center (LAVEC) funds have provided millions of new dollars to CTE programs (Kentucky Department of Education [KDE], 2022d). These funds do have limitations for permissible spending but are earmarked only for programs or pathways in CTE (B. Davis, personal communication, August 23, 2022). This new funding can provide the necessary resources for chapters to go with the affiliation membership option.

Additional funding was provided to each school through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act (Ginn, 2020). This Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding has allowed some schools to expand their Career and Technical Education pathways or enhance their offerings in response to the economic downturn ushered in by the COVID-19 (Ginn, 2020). LAVEC funds are not permissible to use on student membership, but the ability for the funds to also be used on travel expenses frees up funds if a chapter decides to go with affiliation membership (KDE, 2022d). There are many fewer restrictions to ESSER funds, and these new funding streams open new possibilities to SBAE classrooms and their FFA chapters. The findings from this study show themes in the perceptions of successes and failures when implementing FFA membership for all agriculture education students through affiliation.

Simply having access to funding should not be the reason to pursue affiliation membership. Experiences where affiliation membership has been successful were the quest of this study to ensure other chapters also find success in their membership option of choice. Chapters have insight to the perceptions of both affiliation and traditional dues because of this

study. Chapters can be more equipped with information to decide what works best for their chapter's needs.

Definitions, terms, symbols, abbreviations

- **Affiliation**- Membership in FFA due to enrollment in an agriculture education course. Ensuring FFA is an intra-curricular program (FFA, 2022b).
- **Career Development Event (CDE)**- Competitions within FFA where students apply career readiness skills to demonstrate mastery from the local level up to the national level (FFA 2022f).
- **Career and Technical Education (CTE)**- Segment of public education where the focus is on career readiness/preparedness through direct instruction (formerly Vocational Education) (KDE, 2022a).
- **Career Technical Student Organization (CTSO)**-Student groups or clubs that accompany the corresponding classroom instruction. Examples include Technology Student Association for Engineering, FFA for Agriculture Education, FBLA for Business Education. These organizations provide curricular-based opportunities for students in the adjoining CTE pathway (KDE, 2022b).
- **Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief fund (ESSER)**- Federal funding to enhance educational initiatives following the COVID-19 Pandemic provided by Section 18003 of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act (Ginn, 2020).
- **Family Consumer Science Education (FCS)**- Segment of CTE that focuses on life enhancing skills that span a lifetime for families and the relationships that exist (KDE, 2022c).

- **Kentucky Association of Agricultural Educators (KAAE)**- Professional organization consisting of agriculture educators from throughout the state of Kentucky to promote, sponsor, and guide agriculture education. The Kentucky branch of the National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE) (KAAE, 2020).
- **Local Area Vocational Education Center (LAVEC)**- Per pupil funding provided to vocational training to public schools that provides career ready instruction. Based upon pathway enrollment and completion data (KDE, 2022d).
- **Leadership Development Event (LDE)**- Competitions within the FFA where students apply leadership skills gained through FFA to demonstrate mastery from the local level up to the national level (FFA 2022e).
- **National FFA Organization (FFA)**- Largest student led organization in America striving to develop students in the areas of Premier Leadership, Personal Growth, and Career Success through agricultural education. (FFA, 2022a).
- **Perkins V**- Federal performance-based funding set forth in Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (KDE, 2021).
- **Public Law 740**- Federal Charter granting FFA, SAE, and classroom instruction as equally valuable components of the agriculture education program (FFA, 2022c).
- **Supervised Agriculture Experience (SAE)**- Experiential learning for students enrolled in agriculture education courses that demonstrates the tangible skills learned within the classroom and overseen by the agriculture teacher/FFA advisor (FFA, 2022d).
- **SAE for All**- Program sponsored by the FFA to incorporate SAE involvement for all students enrolled in agriculture education courses by providing innovative ideas and projects attainable for students from each locale and background (FFA, 2022d).

- **School Based Agriculture Education (SBAE)**- Agriculture Education programs at local high schools as permitted by the Smith Hughes Act of 1917 (FFA, 2022b).
- **Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS)**- Federal policy providing funding to ensure career readiness skills are provided for each high school student and ensuring that career instruction includes leadership development through the corresponding CTSO (McCabe, 2021).
- **Smith Hughes Act of 1917**-Federal law sponsored by Georgia congressmen that established agriculture education at the secondary level of education (FFA, 2022b).
- **Technical Education Database System (TEDS)**- Government accountability tracking system for career readiness data at the state and federal levels to ensure compliance with state and federal Perkins laws (KDE, 2022e).
- **Three-Component Model of Agricultural Education**- Demonstrates the interdependence of SAE, FFA, and classroom instruction within the Agriculture Education Program (FFA, 2022d).
- **Work Based Learning (WBL)**-Interactions and experiences with industry professionals to simulate work while pursuing an education (Sheehan, 2021).

Summary

The study of perceptions of affiliation membership in FFA would benefit agriculture and other Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO) with qualitative data lending credence to the decision to affiliate or follow the traditional dues collection process. This study noted if affiliated chapters are experiencing noticeable improvements from students and if these chapters are realizing a gain in involvement with a greater pool of chapter members. Data would influence agriculture teachers' decisions moving forward. Having a better grasp of this information can

provide SBAE programs in Kentucky with an additional resource to aid in determining their membership option of choice.

Chapter II: Literature Review

A great deal of thought and conversation has taken place in agriculture education classrooms, offices and at professional development events regarding membership options for chapters and their members. Studies have covered the efficacy of FFA membership for all agriculture education students. The benefits of FFA involvement extend beyond financial and even educational. FFA provides students with a place of belonging (Rose et al., 2016). However, the choice often remains with the student if they want to be involved or even join. Career Develop Events (CDE) and Leadership Development Events (LDE) are just two examples that FFA members have an opportunity to belong. Literature has examined the relationship between agriculture education and FFA involvement, and this chapter seeks to review a good portion of this information.

This review will examine the three-circle model of agriculture education and the impact that has made for almost 100 years. Student involvement in the classroom, through Supervised Agriculture Experience (SAE), and with FFA is also investigated by numerous individuals. This chapter highlights benefits to both the community and to students who engage in all aspects of agriculture education. A look at the affiliation process and the evolution from one state choosing affiliation for all local chapters to a national effort promoting affiliation will occur below. Additionally, this review looks at the impact affiliation has on members and the diversity brought with this membership. Individual chapters who do not choose affiliation membership have examined the works highlighting why students choose to join FFA, and why others choose not to join. Chapter involvement and make-up are discussed as they relate to the method of membership chosen by each school. As the review closes the reader will be aware of the

programs, incentives, and options available to agriculture education students and the entire SBAE program.

History

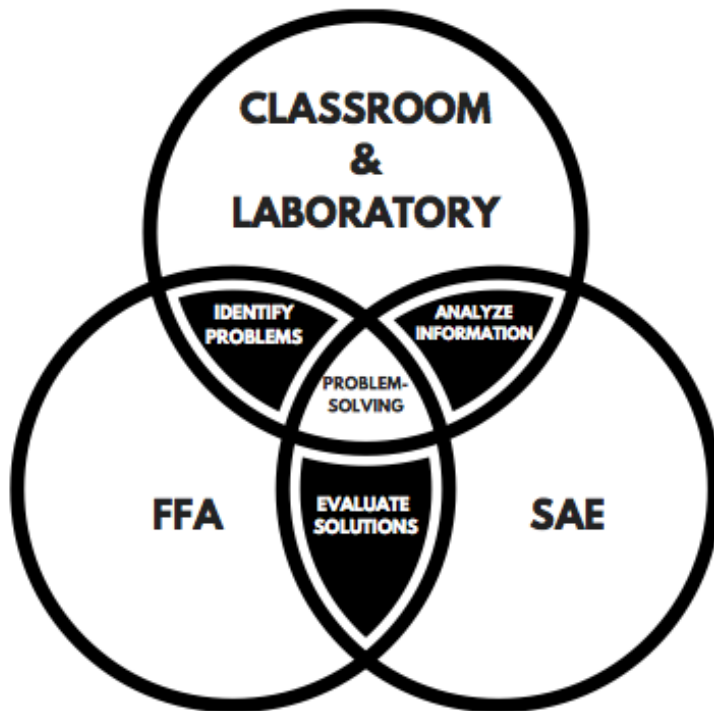
School-Based Agriculture Education (SBAE) became a state and federally supported part of public education in 1917 with the passing of the Smith Hughes Act (National FFA Organization [FFA], 2022c). Young boys received training in the classroom on the technicalities of farming. Then, 11 years later the Future Farmers of American (FFA) was established in Kansas City, Missouri (FFA, 2022c). FFA formed the leadership component of today's agriculture education. As education adjusted to societal changes, FFA and agriculture classes began to enroll African Americans students and girls by the end of the 1960s (FFA, 2022c). These historical changes followed a national expansion of FFA throughout the United States reaching all 50 states and two territories to date, along with international programs (FFA, 2022c). SBAE is a global initiative, and FFA has long been in tandem with the classroom instruction.

Much is made of the three-circle model of agriculture education (see Figure 1). Agriculture education freshmen study this at the university level; and agriculture teachers are encouraged to adopt all three components in their daily instruction. The third component is Supervised Agriculture Experience (SAE). For almost 100 years FFA, SAE, and classroom instruction have been known as the three-circle model; with each component relying on the other for strength and reinforcement. This model ensures students are receiving the complete set of standards that agricultural education is designed to provide learners. Problem solving with adult support or supervision is the premise behind SAE (Figland et al., 2020). SBAE students can take classroom knowledge, problem solve through an SAE, and then take their knowledge both learned and experienced and apply those skills to either competition or community

outreach/service (Figland et al., 2020). With all three components complimenting each other, students can receive, experience, and master concepts when they are enrolled in agriculture education, participating in an SAE, and members of the FFA.

Figure 1

Three-Circle Model of Agriculture Education



Note. From “Reconceptualizing Problem-Solving: Applications for Delivery of Agricultural Education’s Comprehensive, Three-Circle Model in the 21st Century,” by Whitney Figland, Richie Roberts, and J. Joey Blackburn, *Journal of Southern Agricultural Education Research*, 70(1), p. 11.

The three pillars of agriculture education were added to the original foundation laid in 1862 with the Morrill Act which formed the basis for what is now known as SAE, or the reality

of farming (Briers & McCubbins, 2021). Following the 1862, 1917, and then 1928 anchors of SBAE history one can see a steady growth in FFA membership until the 1980s Farm Crisis (Briers & McCubbins, 2021). Membership through the affiliation process provides guaranteed membership in the local, state, and national FFA for all students enrolled in an agriculture education class at their local school. The collection of dues is removed as a task, and each classroom member automatically joins the FFA. The history of agriculture education, the three-circle model, FFA involvement, and the opportunities now available from affiliation membership in the FFA which includes a more diverse agriculture education program make up the history of the organization both several years ago and more recently. Students from every sector who enroll in agriculture education are guaranteed the opportunities available in FFA when affiliation membership is selected.

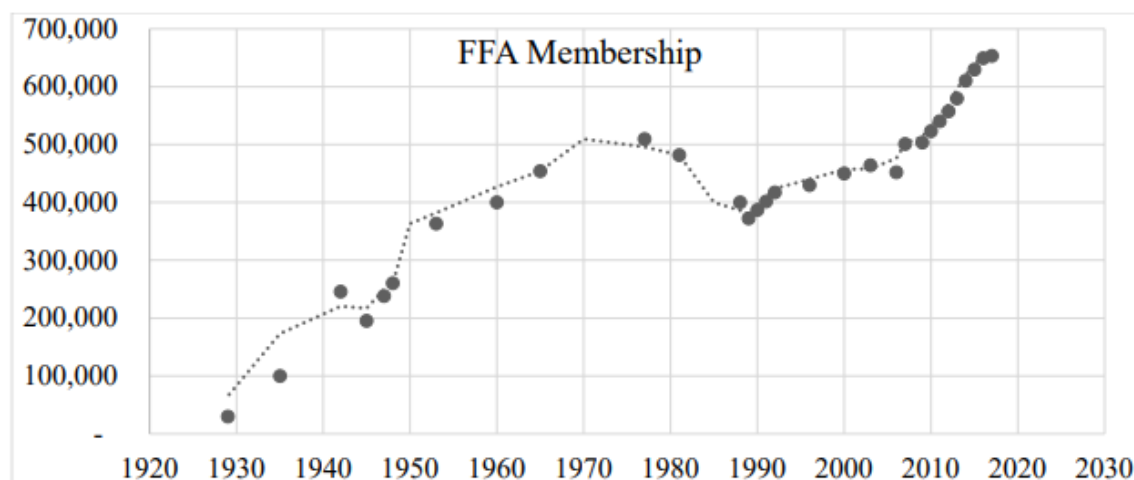
Membership trends

Over 735,000 young people between the ages of 12 and 21 are currently members of the National FFA Organization (National FFA Organization [FFA], 2022d). These students are eligible to join FFA due to their enrollment in an agriculture education class. Likewise, their enrollment in an agriculture education class provides them with the opportunity to develop an SAE project. The terms *eligible* and *opportunity* invoke a choice thrust upon these students, and therein lies the responsibility of the agriculture education instructor to motivate students to capitalize on their opportunities and eligibilities. With an excess of 13,000 individuals serving as FFA advisor and agriculture teacher there continues to be a shortage of educators (FFA 2022d). The ones who are in these roles serve as coach, motivator, parent, advisor, friend, job coach, and teacher, among others. This elevated level of influence and involvement in students' lives

translates into great responsibilities to set students up for success in a global economy with new social and emotional challenges never seen by high school students and graduates.

Figure 2

National FFA Organization Membership from 1928 to 2018



Note. From “Trends and Impact of FFA Affiliation on National FFA Organization Student Membership: A Secondary Analysis of Existing Data,” by C.Z. Sheehan and L.L. Moore, 2019, *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 60(2), p. 210.

The numbers from the National FFA Organization demonstrate an organization that continues to attract young people. Membership in FFA has fallen just twice in history, during World War II and during the Farm Crisis of the 1980s (Sheehan & Moore, 2019). Figure 2 shows the rise in membership was steady and consistent with a growing population prior to the 1940s and this remained consistent until the country was stalled by wartime. A similar stall occurred around the half million-member mark, and that remained in place until affiliation was offered and adopted by various chapters and states (Sheehan & Moore, 2019). More recent climbs can be attributed to affiliation membership, and a decline in 2014 coincides with the National FFA

allowing chapters who were affiliated to return to traditional dues if they desired (Sheehan & Moore, 2019).

Alarming, FFA membership dropped by 27% in the 1980s, while overall student population dropped just 20% (Hoover & Scanlon, 1991). The farm crisis more related to agriculture education and led to a monumental shift within the organization of future farmers. The Hoover & Scanlon (1991) study found those who were enrolled in agriculture education were “more likely white and male, with approximately one-fourth of these enrollees currently living on a farm” (p. 9). This same study found that the agriculture education enrollees were more directly tied to agriculture related occupations whether in their future ambitions or in their parents’ role at the time (Hoover & Scanlon, 1991). Most telling was that decisions about enrolling in agriculture education were most often made at the junior high level, and those academic high achievers were less interested than those with less academic strength (Hoover & Scanlon, 1991). This perception about agriculture education and the farm crisis placed the FFA at an identity crossroads.

During the late 1980s, FFA adopted a new brand, leaving the Future Farmers of America moniker and instead being known as the National FFA Organization (Briers & McCubbins, 2021). This rebranding kicked off a renewed climb in enrollment. Growth continued beyond 1990, but not at the rate prior to the ‘80s. Beginning in 2010, a more rapid increase in membership took place with the introduction of a nationwide affiliation membership option for agriculture education and FFA (Briers & McCubbins, 2021). This membership type, adopted from California, was an innovation the FFA pursued to stay relevant and offer the original intent of agriculture education to all students. Briers & McCubbins (2021) insist FFA has remained relevant with “innovations such as the FFA Affiliation membership model, the Curriculum for

Agricultural Science Education (CASE) program, AET record keeping and program management system, and STEM integration” (p. 10). With increased exposure to FFA and SAE in agriculture education, Briers & McCubbins (2021) state these chapters have experienced membership growth, affecting state and national FFA programming, CDE events, conferences, and conventions” (p. 11).

Slocombe (1979) who studied FFA membership in Kansas indicated early concerns with a decline in membership even prior to the Farming Crisis of the 1980s. Parental support, perceived teacher support, and community involvement were large indicators of student’s desire to join FFA (Slocombe, 1979). Another similarity was that the interest in pursuing a career in agriculture was identical between those joining FFA and those that did not (Slocombe, 1979). The agriculture teacher bore much of the weight as well in the Slocombe (1979) study, “more encouragement was perceived as needed from the vocational agriculture instructor in promoting 100%-chapter membership” (p. 33). This encouragement took place in the classroom and through SAE visits to the student’s farm or place of employment. The support shown to the student at home, at school, and in the community played a key role in the student deciding to join FFA and develop a SAE, or remain as a student only (Slocombe, 1979).

The SAE component

The three-circle model was created for adherence, and studies have shown the importance. However, more recently, 2018 legislation in Perkins V mandated social emotional skills accompany the academic and technical skills of Career and Technical Education (CTE) (Deimler et al., 2021). Agriculture education is already set-up to meet Perkins V with the classroom academic instruction, social and leadership instruction in the FFA, and the work-based technical skills displayed through SAE. Ensuring this total program takes place can be

accomplished through affiliation membership within the FFA. Those agriculture education students who develop an SAE and join FFA can experience all three circles and satisfy Perkins V legislation. Not to mention the simple belief as Deimler et al. (2021) stated, "...when more students have more access to all the benefits of school-based agricultural education, more students succeed" (p. 1). After all, student success is the goal, even if that includes meeting legislative initiatives in the process. Perkins V is a complement to the long-standing preference within SBAE that all students are part of all components of the three-circle model (Deimler et al., 2021).

A disparity between record book (SAE) time was also noted with a much larger number finding importance with the record book when they were FFA members (Retallick & Martin, 2008). This indicates a buy-in from FFA members into the SAE component, but a lack of buy in for both FFA and SAE among agriculture education students who choose not to pursue involvement past classroom instruction. Over a 15-year period agriculture education enrollment grew just over 4%, while FFA rose 2.39%, but during that same period SAE involvement only increased at 1.65% (Retallick & Martin, 2008). This indicates a lull in both second circles in SBAE, with a greater drag in SAE. The same Retallick & Martin (2008) study showed that SAE participation dropped from "in the early 1990s, over 85% of agricultural students were participating in SAE. By 2005, only 55.82% of the students were involved" (p. 34). Membership in FFA and SAE participation waned in comparison to agriculture education in numerous studies leading FFA to adopt policies and practices that strengthened the three-circle approach.

Sheehan (2021) mentions a 20-year discussion concerning the reason FFA is still optional when agriculture education calls FFA integral. No better way exists within agriculture education than to teach conflict resolution, relationships, and self-thinking through FFA involvement

(Sheehan, 2021). Opportunity exists on teams, in presentations, on trips, and in local community service ventures. Yet, few chapters require membership. In addition to FFA involvement, there is the SAE component. Work-Based Learning (WBL) is a more recent initiative in public education, and one emphasized in Perkins V (Sheehan, 2021). Where the third component is SAE or WBL, the inclusion in the complete educational package of SBAE is key. This type of real-world experience cannot be mimicked in a classroom and meets the social-emotional skills so desperately needed in today's young people (Sheehan, 2021). Yet National FFA participation stands at 60% and only 54% of agriculture education students have a SAE (Sheehan, 2021).

SAE projects result in both intrinsic and extrinsic values as the dollar figure below will attest. These work-based SAE projects have earned students over \$4 billion annually (FFA, 2022d). FFA also boasts 24 CDEs to equip students with the skills needed to succeed in life after high school (FFA, 2022d). Without FFA and SAE in the agriculture education program, the agriculture education classroom is commensurate with any other classroom in the school building. Agriculture education takes pride in offering students more than they can receive in the traditional classroom. This is accomplished by the opportunities afforded from all three circles.

The relationship component cannot be overstated. Briers and McCubbins (2021) state, "While in many ways returning to the roots of SBAE and the three-component model, 100% engagement in FFA (i.e., leadership and social-emotional learning) and SAE (i.e., technical skills and work-based learning) may be the key to meeting the growing needs of a more diverse and global agricultural workforce" (p. 10). Much of that relationship tie took place with the on-farm visits from agriculture teachers. What started as practicing at home developed into farming supervision and is today not necessarily tied directly to production agriculture (Briers & McCubbins, 2021). Now school-based SAE programs are available for students who do not have

the support at home, and once again the agriculture teacher is positioned to build that relationship as the student completes the third component of agriculture education.

Optional membership

The goal of 100% membership was set forth by the National FFA Board of Directors for 2028 to commemorate the 100 years of FFA and to ensure that all students are benefiting from FFA involvement (Deimler et al., 2021). Currently, this goal seems unattainable, with 35 states yet to adopt full affiliation for all members (Deimler et al., 2021). However federal changes in CTE stress the importance of all students receiving equitable instruction without barriers. Deimler et al. (2021) state, “The Perkins V needs assessment offers no room for career and technical education to only be offered to students of specific learning ability, language proficiency, religion, color, race, or creed” (p. 19). This inclusive language from Perkins V can include allowing SBAE students to choose between FFA, SAE, and simply classroom instruction. An emphasis by the National FFA, encouragement from federal policies, and an adherence to the three-circle model of SBAE as best practice could lead to an increase in affiliation.

While the goal of all three circles has existed since 1928, opportunities for both FFA and SAE are not always available. Additionally, even when available the ability to opt out of FFA or SAE creates a disconnect between the circles. Case (2010) said, “...it [FFA] is intracurricular to the program, working hand-in-glove with contextual classroom/laboratory instruction and experiential learning as part of a complete agricultural education program (p.1). The roots of this time-tested approach run deep.” Thoughts such as these attest to the age-old belief that the three-circles are a requirement for complete instruction. This leads to the question, of whom is responsible for providing all three circles. Is the state the necessary change agent to push

affiliation? Does the job fall to the National FFA organization or the federal government to demand such membership? Currently, the job belongs to the local agriculture education teacher, who stresses the importance of agriculture education including both SAE and FFA along with the classroom instruction.

Brannon and Holley (1989) said, “our students use our knowledge (or lack thereof), our actions, our enthusiasm, our expressions, and even our habits” (p. 13). These attributes provided by the teacher can cause a classroom student to join FFA and/or develop an SAE. The teacher must make the correlation between classroom content, classroom application (SAE) and leadership development (FFA). When that correlation is created, the teacher has made the difference in exposing the student to the total package that agriculture education has to offer. The teacher makes the difference, (Brannon & Holley, 1989). The question remains, are teachers encouraged to include SAE and FFA in their daily instruction?

Rutter et al. (2002) found Family Consumer Science Education (FCSE) students were more intrinsically motivated than students not enrolled in FCSE courses (p. 7). While no study has yet to compare specific FCSE students with Agriculture Education students a correlation between CTE exists. Intrinsic motivation is a difficult concept to teach, but educators naturally possess this type of motivation and can demonstrate this to their students (Rutter et al.,2002). These characteristics and methods of motivation point to the need for students enrolled in Agriculture Education courses to be involved in all three circles. Through intrinsic motivation, students will desire deeper involvement in the curriculum, an opportunity available through SAE and FFA inclusion with classroom instruction.

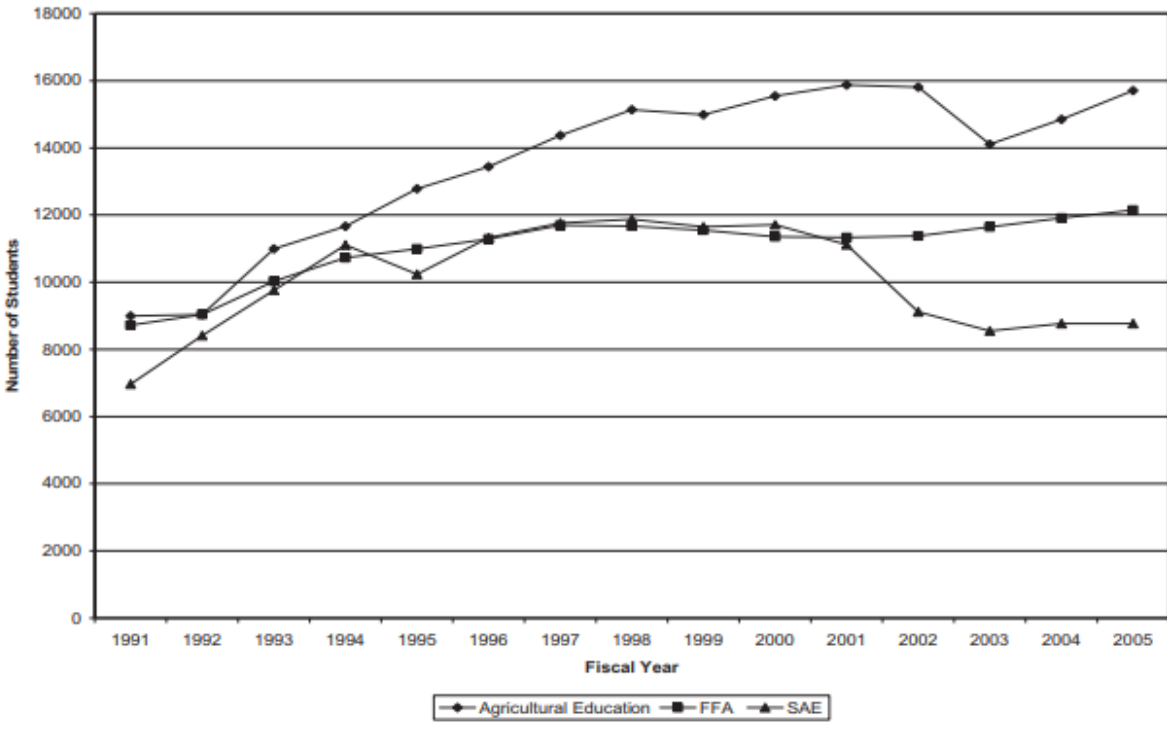
Other studies have focused on why agriculture educators are not advocating to their students for the three-circle approach. Enrollment increases in the classroom may have limited

the ability of all students to be FFA members and have a SAE due to the sheer number of students and limits on staff (Retallick & Martin, 2008). While a school may have an agriculture teacher, there is no funding or support for the agriculture teacher to also serve as a FFA advisor. The lack of funding or support from the district leads students to receive agriculture curriculum the same way they do core subjects. When funding is deficient, there have been innovative approaches to the model that focus on reinforcement of the content through optional application; more of a remediation or enrichment approach (Retallick & Martin, 2008). However, this is not the present approach, nor has this ever been the focus of a traditional SBAE. FFA and SAE are meant to complement classroom instruction through reinforcement of the content, however when congruent; each component is dependent upon the other for existence. One can does not have FFA without classroom instruction, and one cannot have full classroom instruction without the application of SAE.

Gaps between agriculture class instruction, FFA membership, and SAE involvement are shown in Figure 3, indicating an increasing gap between students who choose not to join FFA and those that are enrolled in a class over a fifteen-year period in Iowa (Retallick & Martin, 2008). A similar rate of decline was found for students opting out of SAE development and FFA membership starting in the early 1990s (Retallick & Martin, 2008). Specifically, there was a 20% drop in FFA membership among eligible agriculture education students and a 30% drop by those participating in a SAE between 1991 and 2015 (Retallick & Martin, 2008). These differences spotlight a lack of emphasis on the three-circle model by demonstrating that both FFA and SAE are excluded from the educational experience of many agriculture students. The results of the study show a rebound in agriculture education enrollment, but a leveling in FFA membership and a continued decline in SAE development.

Figure 3

Fifteen-year enrollment trends for agricultural education enrollment, FFA membership, and SAE participation



Note. From “Fifteen-Year Enrollment Trends Related to the Three Components of Comprehensive Agricultural Education Programs,” by Micheel Retallick and Robert Martin, 2008, *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 49(1), p. 32.

Membership involvement

FFA metrics conducted on three sample programs show that initial membership leads to greater FFA involvement and lagging membership leads to lagging FFA involvement (Hangriff, 2021). The results point to the importance of getting a member joined early so they can more

readily reap the rewards of all aspects of agriculture education. When SAE involvement and development was analyzed, the Hangriff (2021) study found “once students begin their SAE in their freshman year, they are more likely to continue being engaged in the process” (p. 27). Again, the teacher has a duty on day one of class to motivate and encourage student involvement in more than just the classroom. Students who participate in all three components of SBAE will in turn show greater involvement, completion, and economic success than those that choose to simply enroll in classroom instruction (Hangriff, 2021). Teachers who have mined the data to show SAE development, FFA membership and participation, and pathway completion are more aptly positioned to grow their programs (Hangriff, 2021). Success in one area can often encourage others to join in that area, and the result can be a bustling SBAE program for all three-components of agriculture education.

A 2018 Iowa State University study examining student perception from the National Farm Business Management Career Development Event (CDE) exemplified the common nature of FFA and classroom instruction. The study found that much of the content was being covered outside of class time, but still primarily by the agriculture teacher (Smalley & Sands, 2018). A disconnect existed in this study that did not carry classroom content into the FFA experience, and that is not the ideal for the three-circle model. If agriculture education is going to connect just as a hand and glove connect then, the teacher must make the conscious decision to include FFA within their classroom instruction. Teacher educators and state staff must provide resources that relate to a CDE for classroom instruction (Smalley & Sands, 2018). Teachers must realize the CDE material is relevant and important enough to be included in their classroom instruction, for example Farm Management CDE material should be covered in an Agriculture Business course (Smalley & Sands, 2018).

The success, or achievement, of members amplifies their ability to promote FFA benefits to non-members; so, another way to increase membership can be derived from increased involvement of those who are already members effectively creating a snowball of membership and involvement (Talbert & Balschweid, 2004). Peer influence is critical in promoting membership, and while friends were not the top-ranking motivator for joining, there is an importance that must be placed on the impact involved classmates have on those who have not joined FFA. The successful SAE program of one student can encourage others to develop their SAE program. A successful community service project from a small group of FFA members can encourage a new community service venture by an entirely different group within the chapter.

A study was conducted for the state of Tennessee in 2013 and found that almost 20,000 students were only participating in classroom instruction, while just under 14,000 were FFA members attempting to obtain the entirety of the three-circle model (Rose et al., 2016). The Rose et al. (2016) study focused on the sense of belonging that FFA can play on students and will be further divulged in this review; however, the point is made that singular involvement in classroom instruction and not FFA hinders complete “fulfillment of three basic human needs: love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization” (p. 36). These human needs supersede the three-circle model but are a result of students completing all components of SBAE.

Membership resistance

The Ohio State University found 75% of students who were enrolled in “vocational” agriculture classes were members of the FFA, and this percentage rose ten percentage points in the Central and Southern Regions, while falling almost 30% in the Pacific Region (Welton & Bender, 1971). In other words, the lack of FFA membership among high school agriculture education students has been a nationwide issue for over 50 years, and that issue continues today.

The recent surge in affiliation membership, particularly in western regions of the nation has leveled out the disparity across the country. However, there continues to be a lack of adherence to the three-circle model in much of the country.

Table 1

Influences Not to Join FFA by Non-Members

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Not interested	100	49.0
Not enough time	64	31.4
Don't know much about it	22	10.8
Money	8	3.9
Don't see benefits	5	2.5
Wouldn't fit in	3	1.5
Don't have high enough grades	1	0.5
Teacher	1	0.5

Note. From “Engaging Students in the Agricultural Education Model: Factors Affecting Student Participation in the National FFA Organization,” by B. Allen Talbert and Mark A. Balschweid, 2004, *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 45(1), p. 36.

Those students who chose not to join cited a lack of interest and time as their reasons for not joining as shown in Table 1 (Talbert & Balschweid, 2004). Specifically, students who chose not to join cited that time commitment to join FFA as their greatest barrier (Talbert & Balschweid, 2004). Agriculture education programs must highlight the FFA opportunities available within the school day and indicate that membership enhances the benefits available. As the Talbert and Balschweid (2004) study concluded, members find great correlation between FFA and agriculture classes and their future; so, striking a balance between attracting new

members through diversification while maintaining traditional cores is crucial (p. 38). Educating non-members of the local opportunities within FFA may be the avenue to attract non-members to join rather than highlighting the trips around the state and nation (Talbert & Balschweid, 2004). Conventions, camps, and conferences may attract many members, but that is not the motivation for some students. In fact, these trips may be a deterrent for some students joining FFA.

Determining why students are not involved in all aspects is only the first question. Other research has been conducted to determine the benefits of student involvement. Nationally, membership in the FFA increased to 4.87% of all students across the country in high school (Currie, 2017). The greatest membership gains were seen in the Central Region which includes the following states: Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Wyoming (Currie, 2017). Additionally, the Central Region boasts that 10% of all high school students are also members of the FFA (Currie, 2017). These students now can be involved in agriculture education and can reap the rewards of FFA and SAE involvement. When opportunities exist and are capitalized upon, students benefit.

Studies into why students choose to join have found that members cite the need for achievement as their greatest motivator, but non-members do not rank achievement as a motivating factor (Turner & Herren, 1997). The need for power ranked at a higher mark for African American students who are enrolled in agriculture classes, so teachers should be mindful of this demographic when promoting FFA membership; however, achievement ranked highest for most respondents (Turner & Herren, 1997). Students who choose to join FFA see these benefits, and those that choose not to join either do not see the benefits or do not value the benefit over other traits they find important. As membership numbers fluctuate nationally, these reasons play a key role.

A study of middle school FFA members in the state of Georgia by Rohs et al. (1999) highlights a similar emphasis on achievement over power as reasons for joining and being involved in FFA. Females students however, showed a greater emphasis on the influence or relationship side of an organization (Rohs et al., 1999). Opportunities that exist for achievement, power, relationships, and influence are many, and these are only available if a student chooses to join FFA. One can join FFA and experience the conferences, competitions, and conventions; finding peers from around the state, country, and world who also want to improve themselves academically.

Similar reasons were given for not joining FFA fifty years ago. The study that found these reasons was prompted by a 1968 speech by President Nixon highlighting the importance of vocational education, but those in agriculture education knew a disconnect was widening between enrollment and membership (Welton & Bender, 1971). Students responded with reasons for and against joining FFA. These reasons included involvement in other activities, inconvenient meeting times, and the perception that the organization was only for farmers (Welton & Bender, 1971). Reasons for joining included trips, tours, advisor influence, friends who were members, and activities (Welton & Bender, 1971). These perceptions from the first 50 years of FFA are indicative of barriers agriculture education students experienced when joining FFA and are some of the same reasons provided today. FFA membership is enjoyed by agriculture education students who do not allow such challenges to interfere with their desire to join.

Perceptions of FFA involvement from members and non-members were studied and revealed a variety of responses, but most important to this review were the answers determining why a student does or does not join once they are enrolled in an agriculture education class

(Crooms & Flowers, 2001). Members found greater importance in joining FFA to be tied to public speaking and parliamentary procedure, while non-members rated those reasons much less necessary for future success (Crooms & Flowers, 2001). Non-members did not show a belief that FFA would help them academically, in reaching future academic goals, or with the ability to grow professionally (Crooms & Flowers, 2001). Additionally, those who chose not to join FFA perceived that FFA events and activities were held at inconvenient times and in inconvenient locations; the exact opposite perception of the members who were surveyed (Crooms & Flowers, 2001). This perception must be addressed for agriculture education students to desire involvement in the FFA. Statistics showing the success of FFA membership and involvement must be shared with students, parents, and administrators.

Agriculture education classes produce enormous benefits to FFA members versus non-members; indicating a greater appreciation for the content by those who join FFA. Table 2 details the interest level, discussion opportunities, excitement level, future preparation, and challenging nature of agriculture classes as perceived by members and non-members: with members rating each question statistically higher (Talbert & Balschweid, 2004). Non-members are not being reached by the same approaches to attract the students who choose to join the FFA. When asked why members chose to join FFA, the reasons started with the agriculture teacher, then self, parents, siblings, and friends as the major influencers (Talbert & Balschweid, 2004). Indicators suggest that those that are not reached by the teacher, parents, or friends must be influenced by another individual or must develop a self-awareness of the needs they possess. This self-awareness can best be developed through exposing future needs. Once cognizant of the future needs, students are more keenly aware of the opportunities and will more likely seek courses, clubs, and programs that provide those real-world skills to prepare for future endeavors.

Table 2***Barriers to Join the FFA by Non-Members***

Category ^a	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	% Ranking #1
Takes too much time	179	2.98	1.68	25.1
The purpose of FFA isn't attractive	178	3.35	1.76	16.3
FFA is not interesting	178	3.56	1.78	17.4
It won't help me in the future	179	3.97	1.87	11.2
Costs too much money	179	4.23	2.03	13.4
Transportation	179	4.34	1.96	12.3
My agriculture teacher	179	5.53	1.84	5.0

^aRespondents ranked seven items as 1-7 with 1 being the greatest barrier.

Note. (a=Self-reported and converted by the researchers to categories). From “Engaging Students in the Agricultural Education Model: Factors Affecting Student Participation in the National FFA Organization,” by B. Allen Talbert and Mark A. Balschweid, 2004, *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 45(1), p. 37.

Membership opportunities

FFA involvement is available for students ages 12-21 who are enrolled in an agriculture education course. This allows for data to be available that indicate the continuation of membership after high school. The advisor was rated as the primary reason for continued involvement (Sanok et al., 2015). Other factors indicate that students in college were more active when collegiate FFA was advertised, and all graduates were more involved if FFA alumni opportunities were present (Sanok et al., 2015). While membership within the high school is the focus; a trend can still be noticed among members who choose to maintain their involvement

after graduation. Benefits of FFA involvement transcend high school but continue to be delivered for those that extend their membership beyond into post-secondary life.

Talbert and Balschweid (2004), had indicated that parents were the number three influence into FFA membership behind only the agriculture teacher and the student themselves. Involved parents have a realization of the needs of society and the individuals within society; therefore members are often more encouraged to join by their influence at home. These at home influencers have a grasp of the opportunities and skills available through FFA involvement. This is particularly true when the parent is an agriculture industry insider (Talbert & Balschweid, 2004). Other factors also influence the decision to join or not, and these are not always associated with individuals.

An intriguing find from another study was that non-members and members alike both found the opportunity to schedule a “vocational” agriculture class similarly important (Slocombe, 1979). Meanwhile the difference lies in the parent support being superb for members, but less than satisfactory for non-member indicating the importance of home support to encourage membership (Slocombe, 1979). Those parents involved in production agriculture or agriculture-related businesses were more likely to encourage FFA participation (Slocombe, 1979). The fear of time restraints and the lack of parental support to join FFA were cited as the leading factors in those who chose not to seek FFA membership (Slocombe, 1979). The support received from parents and community recognition in FFA are two consistent trends noted in membership studies.

A more recent study, referenced earlier, highlights the need for belonging in decisions to join FFA. Table 3 shows over 80% of students surveyed agreed with statements about belonging and feeling loved while participating in FFA (Rose et al., 2016). An astounding 96.2% of

students surveyed agreed that “FFA has made my high school experience more enjoyable” (Rose et al., 2016). Such findings strongly support the social emotional requirements of CTE from Perkins V. These needs for students are real, and the research shows that students not only have the need for love and acceptance, but they crave that support and belonging. FFA provides these supports. The information about FFA and the supports provided must be shared with agriculture education students if membership is going to remain optional. To ignore this information will lead to a continued decline of membership due to the perceived unimportance of FFA even among agriculture education students.

Table 3

Participants School Engagement Relating to Love and Belonging Needs

Statements	Percentage Disagree	Percentage Agree	Percentage Unsure
FFA has made my high school experience more enjoyable.	0.5	96.2	2.3
FFA has helped me remain dedicated to school.	4.3	87.1	7.4
FFA has given me the ability to make friends at my school.	0.5	93.4	4.8
FFA has given me a place to call “home” within my school.	2.3	89.6	7.1
FFA is among my favorite activities at school.	0.5	95.2	3.3
FFA motivates me to attend school.	5.6	85.0	6.6
FFA is at least part of the reason why I remain active at my school.	9.1	81.0	6.6

Note. (n=394). From “The Benefits of FFA Membership as Part of Agricultural Education,” by Chelsea Rose, Carrie A. Stephens, Christopher Stripling, Tim Cross, Danielle E. Sanok, and Shelby Brawner, 2016, *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 57(2), p. 38.

Benefits of taking an agriculture class continue to be bolstered by the belief that the content will help the student prepare for the future (Hoover & Scanlon, 1991). Likewise, the top answer for students who chose not to enroll was the belief that the classes would not be helpful (Hoover & Scanlon, 1991). Students avoided agriculture education classes because they believed the courses were for “farm boys” and many respondents felt they would be the only minority member in the class (Hoover & Scanlon, 1991). Hoover and Scanlon (1991) determined that FFA was a “non-enrollment variable,” therefore not a reason for students to take or not to take an agriculture class (p. 9). Enrollment decisions about agriculture education are made based on student beliefs acquired prior to the ninth-grade level (Hoover & Scanlon, 1991). Approaching and attracting these younger students is crucial to developing a desire among all students to be involved in FFA and enroll in the agriculture education classes that prepare students for the world that awaits them.

Academic and leadership benefits of the FFA are proven through various research. 2019 high school graduates who were FFA members were surveyed and 75% of these graduates indicated an elevated level of skill in leadership development as a youth (Copeland et al., 2020). Additionally, competencies that respondents self-reported as possessing excellence included critical thinking and communication; both skills that FFA aims to instill in youth (Copeland et al., 2020). These same students were asked to discuss their GPA and ACT scores and when compared with national averages, the GPA was almost seven tenths of a point higher for students who were FFA members. Likewise, ACT scores were almost three entire points higher among FFA members when compared to the national ACT composite average (Copeland et al., 2020). Finally, FFA members seek careers in the agriculture sector at a rate over two out of every three demonstrating their preparation as both college and career ready (Copeland et al., 2020). While

this final statistic is specific to an agriculture career, the results still show the preparatory result of FFA membership and involvement.

Membership through affiliation

Rada et al., (2021) states, “Affiliation and SAE for All are both complex philosophical shifts for SBAE as they require teachers to think and act differently than before” (p. 34). However, the goal is to replicate what California has achieved with 100% affiliation to address the technical, academic, and social/emotional needs of students (Rada et al., 2021). Throughout a nationwide study of agriculture education, SAE and FFA lagged similarly (Rada et al., 2021). The dramatic drop began in 2001 for SAE and triggered an additional push for agriculture education to promote SAE For All to reinforce classroom instruction with work-based learning even in non-traditional agriculture venues (Rada et al., 2021). California even incentivized SBAE to include all three circles, funding credentialed educators who provide educationally relevant and challenging lessons (Rada et al., 2021). To graduate, a student must take part in citizenship and leadership initiatives, and these are often met through FFA (Rada et al., 2021). The career connection comes with the SAE, where students take their classroom and FFA experiences and transfer that to an enterprise (Rada et al., 2021). This complete agriculture education experience is the goal and can lead students to an enriched future.

California passed four bills or codes in the early 1980s that established agriculture classes as an educational priority, prevented schools from charging dues or fees for career ready instruction, created grant programs to enhance high school agriculture programs, and provided guidance for achieving these grants (McCabe, 2021). California had just 38% of their students in agriculture classes as FFA members as recent as 1979 (McCabe, 2021). Upon the passage of the four bills, California developed a major shift in FFA membership and involvement. The result

was a model that National FFA today seeks to emulate. McCabe (2021) stated FFA is not a social club, but

...an instructional leadership strategy and therefore all agriculture students should receive those educational leadership skills. These strategies included: team building, teamwork, critical thinking skills, work ethic, public speaking, parliamentary procedure, human relations, and social interactions; character building that promoted citizenship, volunteerism, and patriotism; and promoted cooperation and cooperative attitudes among all students. (p. 13)

With these groundwork achievements, a path was cleared for schools to capitalize on funding and attention was paid to the importance of the agriculture teacher on providing the instruction (McCabe, 2021). The result has been 32 consecutive years of California agriculture education students being members of the FFA at a 100% rate (McCabe, 2021).

As a result, California FFA members attend more leadership conferences than all other FFA members across the entire country (CDE, 2017). This is no surprise as the skills from such conferences are integral to the curriculum. CDE (2017) states, “Instruction intended to develop and/or enhance citizenship, leadership, and interpersonal skills, as defined in the Agriculture Content Standards, is clearly identified in courses and activities throughout the program” (p. 15). There are also clear standards for SAE development and supervision within instruction (CDE, 2017). This statewide emphasis has been the model for the National FFA to promote affiliation membership across the country.

Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) was developed by the United States Department of Labor and stressed the importance of career ready skills (National

FFA Organization [FFA], 2022b). Based on these recommendations, FFA has placed an emphasis on affiliation membership to ensure all agriculture education students are receiving the maximum level of instruction, which is available through classroom instruction, SAE, and FFA (FFA, 2022b). The affiliation process eliminates dues collection which saves time for the agriculture teacher promoting FFA for students to join and stopping instruction for money collection (FFA, 2022B). Additionally, there is no longer a debate about is this part of the class, with FFA being integral, all student received all three-components (FFA, 2022b).

Perkins V legislation requires each school district to conduct a Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment of their CTE programs to receive Perkins funding from the federal government (Kentucky Department of Education [KDE], 2021). The assessment must ensure the programs offered are of appropriate size, scope, and quality (KDE, 2021). The size of the program is determined by the program of studies offered and requires CTE programs that exist to have a minimum of one complete program for pathway completion (KDE, 2021). Once completed, KDE (2021) states “the programs of study (must) lead to industry-recognized certifications, articulated college credit and will link to dual credit opportunities for students and/or work-based learning” (p. 2). Additionally, to be a quality program, KDE (2021) states “there must be a “co-curricular career and technical student organization (CTSO) that provides students the opportunity to engage in leadership development activities” (p. 2). The government recognition of CTSO and acknowledgement of work-based learning highlights the importance of providing the comprehensive education SBAE were designed to provide students.

While some states are completely adhering to affiliation membership, while those states that are not at 100% show that 37% of their members join through the chapter affiliation process (Currie, 2017). In 2017, 23 states used the affiliation program for FFA membership (Currie,

2017). Prior to the affiliation program, the percent of growth among members and the general high school population was 0.10. However, since affiliation began, the FFA has seen a 0.90% growth in membership among total high school populations in the United States (Currie, 2017). Specifically, affiliation states have seen a 1.14% increase in FFA membership compared to student population versus just 0.43% for non-affiliation states (Currie, 2017). Affiliation membership has been helpful in increasing membership growth where populations of students have been changing (Currie, 2017). For states that have a growing population of students, there are only 16% of them who also have a FFA membership growth (Currie, 2017). Regionally three states in the Southern Region utilize affiliation membership, and only one is 100% (Currie, 2017). Alaska is the lone state that can credit affiliation for maintaining the percent of students in high school with FFA membership (Currie, 2017). All other states saw a decline in FFA membership in comparison to student population in their state. Affiliation was the key to Alaska being able to grow membership along with student population.

Statewide affiliation has led to a larger number of members being affiliated rather than dues paying members (Sheehan & Moore, 2019). That number has increased consistently, but the number of chapters who are affiliated continues to be below 50% (Sheehan & Moore, 2019). In 2019, two thirds of FFA chapters in the United States continued to pay dues rather than participate in affiliation membership (Sheehan & Moore, 2019). Dues paying chapters had a higher participation rate in National Chapter Contests, but the proportion of affiliated chapters outweighed those chapters who charge dues (Sheehan & Moore, 2019). The study showed that affiliated chapters received National Chapter Award recognition two times as often as dues paying chapters (Sheehan & Moore, 2019). The exploratory study by Sheehan and Moore (2019) showed that, “dues-based programs were recognized more frequently overall, but typically

comprised 70-75% of chapters while affiliation represented 25-30% of programs” (p. 218). Therefore, affiliated chapters received national recognition at a greater rate than dues paying chapters (Sheehan & Moore, 2019).

An increase of close to 150,000 students were added to the FFA roster in the eight years following FFA affiliation becoming an option for membership (Sheehan & Moore, 2019).

Affiliation numbers decreased in 2014-15 with the change that allowed chapters to opt out of affiliation if they preferred to return to the dues collection method (Sheehan & Moore, 2019).

This was the first year a decrease in the affiliation method occurred since it began in 2010. At the time of the Sheehan and Moore (2019) research, the 2016-2017 school years were the first and only time that there were more affiliated members than dues paying members. The Western Region nears an even split between dues paying chapters and affiliated chapters; while the other regions rely more heavily on dues paying membership (Sheehan & Moore, 2019). There is an even more pronounced difference in the Southern Region, where a greater percentage of chapters are dues paying (Sheehan & Moore, 2019).

Partnerships and diversity

Deimler et al. (2021) states, “Public Law 116-7, which notes that the purposes of FFA include its existence as ‘an integral component of instruction...’ offers a fundamental argument for 100% agricultural education students gaining access and membership to FFA” (p. 19).

Unfortunately, 25% of agriculture education students do not have access to FFA (Deimler et al., 2021). These gaps exist when a school hires an individual as an agriculture teacher only, or the school system or teacher chose not to include FFA as a part of their agriculture education program. Perkins V promoted needs assessment and highlighted the importance of diversity

within a group, if FFA is to meet this Perkins V requirement FFA must be delivered to each agriculture classroom across the country each day (Deimler et al., 2021). Schools and agriculture teachers must embrace this need for diversity and inclusion of all agricultural education students in their FFA programs, not just the traditional membership demographic. They must then transfer that desire to their students so both teacher and pupil are experiencing the true nature of the community in which they live and will someday work.

Due to the affiliation of the state of California, the FFA membership and agriculture education enrollment mimics the demographics of the state, with 52% of membership being Hispanic (CDE, 2017). Examples such as this indicate a by-product of affiliation; the organization is truly available for all and receives the benefits of all within the organization. With enrollment in FFA a guarantee for students enrolled in agriculture courses, there will be previously unreached segments of the population that now can join through affiliation. The affiliation process has removed the barriers that some students had experienced, which prevented them from joining FFA.

Affiliation membership states saw zero examples of a decrease in students joining FFA among growing Hispanic, Black, and suburban groups indicating that affiliation has allowed changes in general high school populations to reflect similar growth in FFA membership (Currie, 2017). Affiliation membership increases populations otherwise resistant to dues paid membership and promotes a more diverse organization. FFA membership must reflect the same diversity seen in student population trends if the organization is to remain viable into the future (Currie, 2017). Unfortunately, the Currie (2017) study found that states that did not use affiliation membership did see a decrease in minority populations, in most cases (p. 22).

Indications are that affiliation membership can increase diversity in the organization as school populations concurrently change.

Male membership also saw a decline in the FFA over the 15-year period analyzed by Retallick and Martin (2008). This indicates that the rise of affiliation has aided in traditional and non-traditional membership levels. Traditional male enrollment continues to exist, but female student enrollment in agriculture education is leading to FFA membership at a greater rate. Female student enrollment in agriculture education rose to 31.96% in 2005 from just 15.29% in 1991 (Rettallick & Martin, 2008). This rise in female student enrollment coupled with affiliation membership would lead to a larger percentage of a previously unreached demographic in FFA.

Educators who have the best intentions for their students will focus on ensuring the future is bright for their students. This can be accomplished when opportunities are afforded to all learners and more inclusive of diverse backgrounds, cultures, and demographics (Briers et al., 2021). SBAE are best able to accomplish the goals when all students are engaged in all aspects of agriculture education. This can happen with affiliation membership, and thus each student is receiving as Briers et al. (2021) states, “curriculum and programming designed specifically to guide students toward becoming successful young adults” (p. 26). Educators who serve as mentors will ensure that all students are receiving the best possible education, not just those that chose to seek such opportunities as FFA involvement and SAE development (Briers et al., 2021).

Roberts et al. (2009) discusses the importance of diversity in an agriculture program and highlights the impact that National FFA Organization staff played upon class enrollment and FFA membership among Hispanic students in three San Antonio high schools. The increase in membership and classroom enrollment then led to an increase in Hispanic student involvement. Officer positions as well as state and national convention attendees experienced an increase in

individuals with a Hispanic heritage (Roberts et al., 2009). The Hispanic influence on communities in San Antonio warranted a similar impact on the organizations, clubs, and classrooms within the community. With the increase in Hispanic student members and enrollment along with an increase in leadership activities, the three chapters saw tremendous growth in participation at events such as banquets, service projects, and leadership development events (Roberts et al., 2009). An increase in Hispanic student involvement at the school level directly impacted parent and alumni involvement (Roberts et al., 2009). Resources, when available and utilized can impact involvement of those underrepresented in agriculture education, and the National FFA is now equipped with such resources (Roberts et al., 2009).

Efforts to reach all students in a SBAE can be furthered with diverse involvement from those not only inside the program, but within the community. This approach allows students to form bonds with peers and leaders in agriculture who, like them, may be non-traditional FFA members (Willis et al., 2018). Educators already know that the classroom must be inviting for non-traditional agriculture students but including these same underrepresented students in the FFA and SAE conversation creates a diverse and real-world look to all circles of the agriculture education model. Resources already exist to promote SAE involvement for non-traditional students (Willis et al., 2018). These resources should be taken advantage of by teachers to reach every student no matter their immediate career goals (Willis et al., 2018).

Summary

In conclusion, there are numerous factors that have led to FFA membership for agriculture education students. Many of these same factors have impacted membership growth and decline. As SBAE programs continue to exist, there must be a uniform approach to FFA membership and SAE participation. Models exist of chapters and states that have adopted

affiliation type memberships, and these can be compared to chapters and states that adhere to a dues collection membership system. The results are mixed as to effectiveness based on the existing literature. Efforts have been made to remedy membership decline and membership apathy while also ensuring FFA Chapters mirror the community and the school's demographic. SAE For All and FFA Affiliation membership are two ways that SBAE are preparing for the future and equipping agriculture education students with the ideal program. As agriculture education enters the second century of existence, and soon sees the 100th year celebration of FFA within agriculture education; the time is right to find a solution that works for today's educational demands, tomorrow's leaders, and the communities in which they serve.

Chapter III: Methodology

Research design

FFA Chapters that chose affiliation membership were gathered from the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) Office for Career and Technical Education (CTE) through an email (Appendix B). The email requested all chapters who have chosen affiliation membership for the 2022-2023 school year and requested that those chapters be sorted by those that have selected affiliation membership one to three years, those who have selected affiliation membership greater than three years, and those chapters that have chosen affiliation membership each year that has been an option in Kentucky. The one-to-three-year separation is important to account for pandemic-related decisions on FFA membership. From this list of programs, emails were sent to those chapters who have experienced affiliation membership requesting their assistance in this study (Appendix C). This target population of FFA programs serves as the basis for identifying themes generated from affiliation membership. The Winter Professional Development hosted by KAAE also posed an opportune time to interview chapter advisors who were attending so an email was sent to KDE and the Office for CTE requesting a room to host these interviews (Appendix D).

Purpose of the study

This research aimed to study the phenomenological impact of affiliation membership among chapters in Kentucky through a series of questions. Perceptions were gathered for how affiliation membership has altered classroom enrollment, contest participation, FFA involvement, classroom instruction, and learning outcomes. This determined the perception of agriculture educators on affiliation membership and the perceived impact provided to students and chapters. How has affiliation membership impacted students and chapters? Themes were

identified through the study that point to impacts from the phenomenon of affiliation membership versus traditional dues collection.

Research questions

The interviewees were asked a series of questions around the primary research questions. Preliminary questioning focused on demographic information from each teacher to determine if there were factors that would indicate a trend among successful and unsuccessful affiliation memberships. The primary research questions are:

Enrollment Research Question 1: What impact has FFA affiliation membership played on agriculture course enrollment?

Involvement Research Question 1: How has Career Development Events (CDE) and Leadership Development Events (LDE) participation been impacted by FFA affiliation membership?

Involvement Research Question 2: How has FFA affiliation membership impacted FFA involvement in addition to Career Development Events (CDE) and Leadership Development Events (LDE)?

Outcome Research Question 1: How has classroom instruction changed since the beginning of FFA affiliation membership?

Outcome Research Question 2: What learning outcomes have been altered after participation in the FFA affiliation membership?

Description of population, participants, and voluntary participation

Agriculture teachers and FFA advisors who were designated by the KDE office for CTE as teachers who utilize affiliation membership were the target population of this study. Those who responded as willing participants were emailed an informed consent form as well as a

calendar to determine their availability (Appendix E). Each participant maintained their anonymity and all responses were kept confidential throughout the interview process.

All teachers who were interviewed were agriculture teachers and FFA advisors in Kentucky. This sampling of teachers was skewed by those who already had a relationship with the author and felt the inclination to assist. However, with the sampling limited to only those teachers who were working with affiliated chapters, there is fidelity. Additionally, there was great benefit to the study for those involved. The results should have indicated if the affiliation approach is effective and having the impact on students, enrollment, and the program as desired.

Description of instruments

Participants were interviewed via Zoom or in-person depending upon the most convenient preference of the interviewee. The Kentucky Association of Agriculture Educators (KAAE) hosts a Winter Professional Development in Elizabethtown, Kentucky each December, so interviews were also offered to be conducted at that event. All participants who chose to be interviewed via Zoom were provided the link via their school email (Appendix F). A location at the Winter Professional Development was also requested to conduct in-person interviews. Demographic questions were initially asked to ensure they have experience with affiliation and to determine any existing trends among demographics. These demographic questions were followed by the interview protocol (Appendix G). The interview protocol aided in consistency among interviewees and provided insight to the demographics and perceptions of those interviewed.

By utilizing an interview instead of a focus group, teachers were more apt to give individual and accurate answers to the questions pertaining to their chapter's experience. Focus groups would trend toward similar answers and themes. An individual interview allowed for

more authentic responses and more accurate development of themes impacting the perception of affiliation membership in Kentucky (Creswell, 2018). Additionally, a recording whether in person or via Zoom, provided more time to measure a response from an author's perspective because the interview was recorded, played back, and analyzed deeper than an answer given in a live interview.

Prior to research and following the successful proposal of the dissertation, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was sought from the IRB office at Murray State University. The approval was sought by the dissertation chair, and once received research began (Appendix A). The initial step in the research was acquiring names of chapters and advisors that utilize affiliation membership and then those contacts were contacted to be interviewed and gauge perceptions on the subject.

Data security

Both in-person interviews and Zoom interviews were recorded. The notes and recordings were held on a password-protected computer and remained confidential. Identifying demographics were kept confidential as well; however, these aided in determining if such variables impacted perception. Exclusive demographics were excluded from the study due to the lack of confidentiality and the unreliability of a small set of interviewees from that specific demographic. Recordings were kept for the sole purpose of ensuring accurate information was recorded and the interviewees' statements were not misrepresented when initially hearing the responses. All recordings and identifiable notes were deleted at the conclusion of a successful dissertation defense. During the research, the computer workstation was password protected or locked to avoid the chance that others could access the information or identities of those involved in the study.

Variables in the study

Variables for this study included the different methods of interview. Varying modes were used to provide greater convenience for the interviewee and to ensure that a sampling from the entire state of Kentucky was taken, and not just from the westernmost portions of the state most convenient to the author. A Zoom call provided the interviewees the opportunity to gather their thoughts and respond with more preparedness while face-to-face interviewees tended to reply quicker to rid the room of silence following a question. Moderating variables such as gender and years of experience also played a role in the outcome of the study (Creswell, 2018).

Demographic questions allowed for identification of participant backgrounds and assisted in determining the impact on interviewee's perceptions. These are the only variables of the study, as the questions and selection of interviewees was controlled by selection of participants and an interview protocol (Appendix H).

Procedures for data analysis

The interview protocol outlines the questions that were posed to each participant. These responses were analyzed using NVIVO software. The efficient nature of NVIVO allows for data to be stored in one location. There was no known number of participants, and if many teachers participated, NVIVO software could explore responses and categorize them among subgroups for the entirety of the interviewees. NVIVO is designed to match responses and feedback in qualitative studies to identify trends between responses. The coding of this data helped develop consistent categories and subcategories from interviewee responses. From these categories, themes or trends were synthesized by NVIVO to identify themes among chapters that chose affiliation membership. Ideally there was the development of five to six major themes that can be analyzed more directly and studied further in the future (Saldana, 2016). Once themes were

derived from the analysis, one was more equipped to recognize perceived benefits of affiliation and perceived difficulties that may exist through the affiliation process.

Summary

This phenomenological study sought to identify perceptions of agriculture educators who have experienced membership in the FFA through the affiliation method. Interviews of agriculture teachers provided perceptions of affiliation for agriculture education programs. Utilizing the previously discussed research questions, consistent themes and trends emerged to the researcher. By identifying perceived trends in involvement levels of agriculture education students, and their desire to enroll in agriculture courses one can better understand affiliation results. Additionally, the outcomes of affiliation membership were perceived through this study, as teachers will respond to their instructional and programmatic changes since participating in FFA affiliation membership.

Chapter IV: Findings and Analysis

Chapter I highlighted the membership options for FFA Chapters across the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Agriculture education students can pay traditional FFA dues, or those FFA chapters can choose to affiliate, ensuring that each agriculture education student is automatically a member of the FFA. With the assistance of the CTE division of KDE, data was available to indicate which schools are using affiliation membership with their FFA. This collaboration with the KDE provided an example of the P-20 context for this study. Research examined the historical progression of FFA and SBAE from their infancy, through global conflicts, and into the current state following a global pandemic. The National FFA Board of Directors has set for a goal of 100% membership by 2028 to commemorate the 100 years of FFA and to ensure that all students are benefiting from FFA involvement (Deimler et al., 2021). Chapter II pursued causes of membership decline and explored items impacting agriculture education students joining and not joining FFA. Perceptions of FFA involvement from members and non-members were studied and revealed a variety of responses, but most important to this review were the answers determining why a student does or does not join once they are enrolled in an agriculture education class (Crooms & Flowers, 2001). Following this review, Chapter III highlighted the methodology of this phenomenological study with an approach to qualitatively study perceptions of those who take part in affiliation membership throughout the state of Kentucky.

The office of CTE was able to provide contact information for 78 chapters out of the overall total of 186 that utilize affiliation membership in the Kentucky FFA Association. Of the 78 chapters, 17 were middle school chapters, leaving 61 high schools to contact and inquire about participating in an interview. Agriculture teachers from the 61 high schools received an

email requesting an interview and 15 replied with an indication of interest in assisting. Four requested a Zoom interview, while the other 11 planned to be available at the Agriculture Education Winter Professional Development on December 28, 2022. In-person interviews were held during the Professional Development at John Hardin High School in Elizabethtown, Kentucky. Prior to the Professional Development, two Zoom interviews were conducted, and two more were attempted, but schedules did not align. At the Professional Development, eight more interviews were conducted. On December 29, a second request was made of those that had indicated interest in participating in interviews at the Professional Development to be interviewed via Zoom instead. One additional teacher replied with availability and that was the final interview conducted. The results from the 11 interviews indicated themes and word frequencies when analyzed using the NVIVO software. These themes were then organized into perceptions, providing the researcher with findings reported in this chapter.

Demographics

There were 61 high school agriculture programs contacted on November 21, 2022. Eighteen percent of these programs were interviewed by December 30, 2022, which provided an insight into perceptions of a representative cross-section of Kentucky Agriculture Education Programs. Efforts were made to include agriculture teachers from across the state, and from those of all backgrounds and experience levels. Those choosing not to participate were given the option to participate via Zoom or when agriculture teachers meet for Professional Development on December 28, 2022 in Elizabethtown. A map of Kentucky shows that Elizabethtown is very central to the entire state, so the in-person interviews were a way to ensure all of Kentucky was invited.

Kentucky FFA divides the Association into 12 geographic regions. The 11 participants represented seven of the 12 regions of the Kentucky Association, stretching from the Pennyrile Region at the edge of Lake Barkley, past the cities of Louisville and Lexington into the Bluegrass Region. Chapters also hailed from the southern border of the state with the Barren River Region, up towards Ohio and the Northern Kentucky Region. Two of the 11 participants were from the same county, but not the same school. This county is the second largest school district in the state and has the greatest diversity of student population in the Commonwealth.

Table 4.1

Summary of Respondents Gender

	Frequency	Percent
Females	7	64
Males	4	36
Total	11	100%

Note. These are how respondents identified gender.

Seven of the 11 participants were female, demonstrating a nearly 65% participation level (Table 4.1). Overall, in Kentucky, 53% of agriculture teachers are female, so this study was only slightly higher in female to male participation (Agricultural Education Program Consultant/State FFA Advisor, personal communication, January 3, 2023). Another majority was noted with 73% of study participants coming from a multi-teacher agriculture program where more than one teacher manages the FFA Chapter (Table 4.2). Within the entire state, there is a majority (53%) of programs with single teachers (Agricultural Education Program Consultant/State FFA Advisor, personal communication, January 3, 2023).

Table 4.2***Summary of Respondents Program Size***

	Frequency	Percent
Single Teacher	3	27
Multi-Teacher	8	73
Total	11	100%

Note. These are how respondents identified program size.

Table 4.3***Summary of Years of Experience***

	Frequency	Percent
1-5 years	3	27
6-10 years	8	73
11-15 years	7	55
16-20 years	3	41
20+ years	1	13
Total	11	100%

Note. These are how respondents identified experience teaching agriculture

All those who participated in the interviews completed the interview, and the average years of experience came in at 10 years of experience teaching agriculture, while the overall state average is 11 years of experience (Table 4.3) (Agricultural Education Program Consultant/State FFA Advisor, personal communication, January 3, 2023). The final demographic question dealt

with years of experience with affiliation. These numbers showed a consistent average of three years of experience with affiliation. One teacher who was interviewed had experienced affiliation at another school before settling in at their current school. However, all other teachers had only experienced affiliation at their current school, lending well to a future study on affiliation perceptions of effectiveness at differing types of schools and locations.

Findings

The purpose of this study was to qualitatively examine the impact of affiliation membership among chapters in Kentucky through five questions pertaining to the perceived impact affiliation has played on enrollment, classroom instruction, and FFA involvement. The findings from the research have been dissected with NVIVO software to identify themes among perceptions. The following research questions guided the study:

Enrollment Research Question 1: What impact has FFA affiliation membership played on agriculture course enrollment?

Involvement Research Question 1: How has Career Development Events (CDE) and Leadership Development Events (LDE) participation been impacted by FFA affiliation membership?

Involvement Research Question 2: How has FFA affiliation membership impacted FFA involvement in addition to Career Development Events (CDE) and Leadership Development Events (LDE)?

Outcome Research Question 1: How has classroom instruction changed since the beginning of FFA affiliation membership?

Outcome Research Question 2: What learning outcomes have been altered after participation in the FFA affiliation membership?

Words such as know, helps, opportunity, understand, compete, dues, program, contest, learning, everybody, participate, and involved found their way into participants answers providing some indication of the perception of affiliation. However, when analyzed in context of their interviews, not all were impressed with the involvement or program path affiliation membership had charted for their programs. This leads to detailed findings analyzed below for each of the research questions and the differing perceptions affiliation plays on enrollment, involvement, instruction, and outcomes. Figure four details words used with great frequency in the answers of the respondents and the word cloud shown provides a visual for the responses given throughout the interviews.

Figure 4

Word cloud generated from overall responses of participants



Findings for Enrollment Research Question 1:

There are many variables one must consider when investigating program enrollment. Schedule changes, teacher fluctuation, courses offered, and societal changes through a pandemic are just a few of the factors influencing agriculture program enrollment in recent years. This study aimed to determine perceptions of agriculture teachers of their use of affiliation membership on program enrollment. Increases in enrollment for agriculture courses would bolster the impact of affiliation if that were the determining factor for such increases. None of the participants pointed to enrollment increases that they attributed directly to affiliation membership.

Students were now nervous about the requirement to be in FFA, but the changes to the course pathway and an increase in co-op opportunities for students may have been the true cause for an enrollment decrease. (Participant 1)

Other participants mentioned “zero,” “none,” and “no” benefit to course enrollment when the chapter adopted affiliation membership.

I wish I could say it helped, but I honestly don’t know if it has. We are still a new program, year four of the program, and I affiliated to take down one of those barriers on getting students involved, but I’m not seeing the benefit from it at this time. (Participant 6)

Course enrollment was not the purpose for us choosing affiliation. (Participant 3)

Agriculture class enrollment was the ticket to FFA. (Participant 9)

A new program at a new school with affiliation membership guaranteed students had somewhere to identify and become involved. While the enrollment increases are not able to be directly tied to affiliation membership, there is no doubt for Participant 9 that affiliation was the correct path for a new program wanting to establish an opportunity for student involvement. While enrollment increases were not the objective, enrollment has remained in high demand and Participant 9 attributes affiliation membership with ensuring that continues; going so far as to call affiliation a “no brainer” for the school.

Findings for Involvement Research Question 1:

Participation in CDEs and LDEs were also examined in this study. Numerous participants pointed to involvement opportunities being the driving force behind their switch and continued decision to affiliate membership. Participant 1 said there was a “dramatic increase in participation because of the confidence instilled in a student knowing they had a chance to compete.” Others noted the increased opportunities to transfer classroom activity to a competitive event:

It's just the fact that we tell them that we will have a team out of the class. For instance, I'm going to have a land judging team out of my agriscience class. I'm going to have the top four out of the test for the class are going to be the ones that participate. Unless they've got football or volleyball, and then I'm going to drop down to the next kid or the next kid, so you don't have to worry about well are they are member or are they not.

(Participant 2)

It has allowed us to compete in more stuff throughout the year, um we've been able to pick-up a few extra teams here and there. I mean, two years ago we had an equine team that (my co-worker) had (trained) that won the state contest. We've been able to pick up a

few more teams consistently because we've got more numbers there in FFA. (Participant 2)

Two specific examples were cited by Participant 10; horse judging and vet science are both CDEs that Kentucky holds state contests for in November. Because of affiliation, Participant 10's school has had greater interest in events such as these because all students in the classroom were eligible to compete with their membership.

The content was taught years prior, but affiliation membership provided the membership to kids that Participant 10 said, "wouldn't have normally paid." "I don't have to say, those that paid can participate," Participant 8 shared. Likewise, Participant 5 stated that affiliation has "cut out a step, formerly the conversation was, give me \$15 and then you can go compete."

The reason we have chosen affiliation it that dues had to be sent in in November, some of our contests were in December or March and it would never fail that a kid would I want to be on the welding team, or speaking team in March, well you didn't pay membership. Once we went to affiliation we didn't run into that. That's the reason we chose affiliation. I don't know that it's helped us membership wise, but it's made it more convenient for contest stuff. (Participant 2)

There is now a seamless transition from the classroom instruction to chapter contest, with the top four going to compete.

Participant 9 stated, "students don't have to take a chance" and join so when they participate in class, they are already eligible to compete in a CDE or LDE. As for Participant 5, "there is now no need for the conversation if someone is eligible to compete." The top four from each class are chosen to compete, and "there is no worry if they are a member or not due to affiliation."

I can start the unit off by stating, everyone has an opportunity to compete and travel, and at the end of the unit, we go, and I find this very helpful. (Participant 8)

No fee to compete. (Participant 8)

Students who would not have shown interest in FFA but developed a passion for the ag sales contest are therefore ready when the opportunity is now available, this led to a regional event for the student. Regional events lead to state and national events, and before long a student who started in a class uninterested in FFA has achieved a state or national degree. This is particularly true for non-traditional students who weren't destined to become FFA members. (Participant 9)

Diversity has improved in CDE participation. (Participant 4)

A barrier was removed for all students when we chose affiliation membership.

(Participant 9)

We have a broader group to pull from, not only members, but a broader pool with more opportunities given. (Participant 7)

Participant 10 stated, "I love not saying, just for FFA members anymore, all have the opportunity." This inclusion also leads to "more non-traditional students, not just FFA rockstars," Participant 9 shared. Affiliation also helps that student who has the academic interest but would have lacked the extracurricular push to compete. "They're in a vet science class so that (affiliation) gives them an opportunity to participate in those one or two events that they've always had an interest in but didn't have to pay \$20 to do it if that was all they wanted to do in FFA," Participant 11. The inclusion of all students in FFA led participant 10 to state, "kids started participating in class contests who wouldn't have paid dues in years past." Based on the participants and the themes presented, affiliation removes any financial barrier for students and

provides them with a seamless transition between the classroom and FFA involvement.

Findings for Involvement Research Question 2:

Involvement in competitions were not the only perception examined with each participant. There was also an effort to determine what perceived impact affiliation membership had on involvement in recreational, community service, and educational components of FFA membership.

Before we did affiliation we would have approximately 80 members give or take a few, so our FFA meetings would usually get 50%. So now that we have affiliation, we have 150-160 members on a given year, we tend to 100 it's so large now we must have them in the cafeteria. We've just got a lot more what I say involvement, just kids coming because they wouldn't come if we hadn't paid the dues for them. (Participant 2)

In addition to coming to meetings and calling that involvement, there's also the fact that all agriculture students are now a member, and their membership can be evaluated.

We require each agriculture student to attend one FFA event per semester for points in class, this can be a meeting during the school day or something else. (Participant 10)

Affiliation membership results in all agriculture classroom students having access to the FFA organization, and therefore have the possibility of academic grades being tied to their FFA participation.

This type of involvement is just the beginning. Recreational events have noted increased participation with affiliation membership by numerous participants.

We've had some that have been involved simply for like our fun trips that wouldn't have been involved but event on those we're only taking 10-12 students total so I think it's helped. (Participant 6)

We had a lot more at Christmas party and cook-out. FFA is now more family based and not small group based. Everybody feels welcome and able to participate. (Participant 7)

We can get them in the door, then they keep coming back so it's always very helpful for us because since we started doing affiliate membership instead of just taking competitors to State Fair (in August) we'll take the first 55 members, so I mean right of the bat we get 55 no problem and then once we take them to State Fair then typically they come to the first meeting you know they keep coming back and you know then they want an FF jacket and they you know it just get them more and more invested where in the past if you didn't pay your dues then nothing was an option for you. (Participant 11)

That investment theme was also mentioned by Participant 9, "there's buy-in from students because we have invested in them on day 1." Participant 10 stated, "students feel more comfortable to go on trips now that they are a member."

Opportunities are more attractive to all students too, according to Participant 10 who stated, "the beef council came and did a presentation about a trip that FFA kids can go on, and now all have access to attend." "A teacher doesn't have to say, those who paid can do this activity, Participant 8. The result of this removed barrier is noted by several participants, "more students at recreation events like the fall picnic," participant 8. "Field trips and community service had 6-10 kids pre affiliation and now 70-80 post affiliation," participant 1.

Affiliation provides a reason for kids to be in FFA. This is not just for a select few who felt invited or wanted to pay dues. FFA is not just for those who could afford to pay dues. Affiliation ensures that FFA is for all. (Participant 7)

At the same time, there is the increase in numbers from those less than interested, "other show up to events who are more difficult now that they are members due to affiliation,"

participant 5. Out of 11 participants, eight saw the involvement in activities in addition to CDE and LDE improve with affiliation membership.

Findings for Outcome Research Question 1:

The first outcome question dealt with how instruction had changed with the program participating in affiliation membership. Participants 1 and 10 commented that, implementing the AET program was easier since all were in FFA, and now all can work on an SAE. Not all have SAE, but all must reflect; prior to affiliation they didn't buy-in on this concept. Students are responsible for tracking work, budgets, and community service once a week. Participant 3 and 10 stated there has been "no change to my instruction with affiliation."

FFA affiliation has increased buy-in for students in classroom. (Participant 9)

Classroom instruction is not taken up with dues collection, but that's the only change to instruction. (Participant 8)

CDE and LDE is easier to incorporate into classroom instruction. (Participant 9)

Despite these noted changes, altered instruction due to affiliation was not noted by participants.

I don't teach CDE in class, (I don't) teach contests. Prior to affiliation this was harder to incorporate. For example, the Vet Science CDE has an ID list, and that contest is taught to all students. With that they are more knowledgeable if they participate in a CDE. Prior to affiliation I felt guilty to require 300 ID items. (Participant 10)

The three-circle model for content areas and CDE practice exams pertain to more students. If only 20% are in FFA then the content from the contest doesn't pertain as much to the students who are not members. With each student being a member that is no longer the case. (Participant 9)

It's (affiliation) allowed I think for a greater implementation of intracurricular instruction of CDEs and LDEs because we know that we can truly teach that content in class and have a real tryout and whoever gets chosen can go because they're a paid member.

(Participant 11)

Relevance, practicality, and easier incorporation were noted, but not change to instruction.

Findings for Outcome Research Question 2:

Learning outcomes that have been altered due to affiliation membership was the final research question. These responses were more positive than those that dealt solely with instructional changes. Outcomes that have been impacted by affiliation are outlined below with participant responses:

CTSO participation is now part of the syllabus. (Participant 9)

Students must participate in one FFA event each semester. (Participant 10)

When we do an FFA unit I think it helps them to understand you know this is all tied in together, because in the past it was like well I'm not an FFA member why do I have to participate in this, but now everybody is understanding the intracurricular aspect of it and don't just see it as a club they can do after school. (Participant 11)

Principles of ag prior to affiliation the FFA unit was a struggle, but now FFA applies to all, not a select few, now they are all impacted by the unit because they are all members.

(Participant 5)

Students understand where the learning targets come from, for example the vet science practicums are the learning outcomes in the Vet Science course. Like how to give a

subcutaneous shot is an example of a hands-on experience from a CDE that was a learning outcome. Now the students know where the information (targets) come from.

(Participant 7)

Participants 4, 8, and 9 stated that the same standards are being taught, but the awareness, understanding, and excitement of FFA events and the extracurricular side of the classroom are improved.

Conclusion

This chapter highlights the findings from the interviews of 11 participants who took part in the study. The research questions lent themselves to identify themes among all responses after the transcripts were analyzed through NVIVO. These themes were coded, word frequency was studied, and codes were referenced to determine consistent perceptions throughout all participants. The phenomenon of affiliation membership from each interviewee allows readers to hear directly from their own words the impact affiliation membership has played on their program, students, and teaching.

The initial findings of this research relate to the first research question. Determining what impact affiliation membership has played on program enrollment. As programs across the country look to stay relevant and expand with more teachers and more course offerings, a perception that affiliation increased program enrollment was an important factor to consider. There were some indications that enrollment was increasing in specific programs, none of the eleven participants were willing to state that affiliation membership had led to any growth in program enrollment. None indicated there was an adverse effect either, but no one stated that their program had grown with the adoption of affiliation membership. A consistent statement

following this question, indicated that program enrollment was never the reason a school chose affiliation membership in the first place.

The second research question investigated the participants' perception that affiliation membership had increased involvement in CDE and LDE. Convenience for the teacher and diversity of membership were the consistent themes noted from the responses to this question. 73% of those responding indicated an increase in involvement in CDE and LDE with affiliation membership. This increase took the form of more students participating at the chapter level in contests, but also an increase in students wanting to participate; therefore, chapters took teams to regional contests where otherwise they would not have fielded a team due to a lack of interest. For diversity's sake, the perception was that affiliation had opened the door to FFA for students who otherwise would not have joined. These students came to FFA with backgrounds that might have been non-traditional in their view of agriculture, but when exposed to the content in class they did not hesitate to compete.

The reactions shared provide actual observations and experiences from those utilizing affiliation membership in Kentucky. Feelings among participants varied, with some finding great benefits and others indicating little change or impact from affiliation. Themes developed through this study will be examined further in the following chapter.

Chapter V: Conclusions and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine perceptions of the impact FFA affiliation membership makes on agriculture programs in Kentucky. In Chapter IV, the collected data results from interviews of participants were presented and analyzed for consistent themes across agriculture education teachers in Kentucky. The research questions were presented with their individual findings. In Chapter V, the data will be further discussed to draw conclusions on the overall perception of affiliation membership in Kentucky. Lastly, the relationship to other research will be connected, P-20 implications will be noted, and suggestions for future research possibilities will be shared.

Summary

Using the data of affiliation chapters in Kentucky provided by the KDE a total of eleven agriculture teachers were interviewed in this qualitative study. The teachers responded to an email request for an interview or agreed to be interviewed in person at a Winter Professional Development in Elizabethtown, Kentucky. Each participant completed the informed consent form prior to their interview. While over 60 teachers were initially contacted about the study, the 11 respondents provide a diverse sampling of Kentucky agriculture educators. These 11 participants answered five research questions on program enrollment, participation, and instruction. With an excess of 13,000 individuals filling the role of FFA advisor there continues to be a shortage of educators nationwide (National FFA Organization [FFA], 2022d). The teachers must serve over 735,000 young people who are members of the National FFA Organization (FFA 2022d). This study aimed to investigate if the FFA members were being served by those agriculture teachers and determine if affiliation membership provided benefits to the programs.

Discussions and Conclusions

Initially, participants were asked about enrollment's impact from affiliation. Enrollment increases in the classroom could limit the ability of all students to be FFA members and have a SAE due to the sheer number of students and limits on staff (Retallick & Martin, 2008). However, there were no participants who indicated that affiliation membership had increased their course enrollment. Hoover and Scanlon (1991) found that students avoided agriculture education classes because they believed the courses were not for them, but only for, as they perceived, "farm boys" and felt they would be the only minority in the class (Hoover & Scanlon, 1991). This study concurred with Hoover and Scanlon (1991), that FFA was a "non-enrollment variable;" therefore, not a reason for students to take or not to take an agriculture class (p. 9). Findings indicated that affiliation membership or not, there was no noticeable impact on enrollment.

The strong response was that affiliation membership had led to an increase in CDE and LDE participation. This fact was noticed at the chapter level, but also at regional and state competitions where prior to affiliation the option to compete was not so recognizable for students. A study of 2019 high school FFA members found that 75% of these students indicated an elevated level of skill in leadership development as a youth following their graduation (Copeland et al., 2020). This was replicated with increased membership involvement with affiliated membership. An additional piece of this finding was the increase in diversity of members involved that occurs with affiliation membership. The background or demographics of the agriculture student does not impact whether a student joins or not, they are affiliated with the chapter, and thus they become a member. The result is a chapter that is diverse and active.

A second key finding is that once a student has competed in a regional CDE or LDE they are now a significant step closer to achieving a state degree in an organization they may have not even joined if not for affiliation. SBAE students can take classroom knowledge, problem solve through an SAE, and then take their knowledge both learned and experienced and apply those skills to either competition or community outreach/service (Figland et al., 2020). The work with their SAE makes them eligible for degrees within FFA, awards impossible to receive without students that are involved members. An interesting demographic of those who did not find an increase in CDE or LDE participation was that two thirds of those who saw no increase were from single-teacher programs. This indicates a smaller program could limit participation more so than student membership. Larger programs gain larger portions of members with affiliation and can more readily add a contest or activity with increased membership among multiple teachers. One-teacher programs are limited to participate in the events that the one-teacher can arrange; thus, limiting the impact of a larger chapter on participation.

The third finding focuses on involvement in the chapter in addition to CDE or LDE. Initial membership leads to greater FFA involvement and lagging membership leads to lagging FFA involvement (Hangriff, 2021). Once again, 73% of participants in the study indicated a dramatic improvement in participation with affiliation membership. An important note is that this is not the same 73% who saw an increase in CDE and LDE participation. There was a noted difference in one school's perception of non-CDE and non-LDE involvement with affiliation membership. With an increased pool of students who are members, there was an increase in students who have less of a vested interest in FFA and made managing trips and events more difficult than when members had chosen to join through traditional dues collection. Overall, the

73% of schools who noted an increase in participation, indicated the increase was substantial, sometimes doubling the interest and attendance than in pre-affiliation years.

The fourth finding relates to changes in instruction with affiliation membership, and there were no chapters that indicated any change to their instruction. Of the respondents, 18% had implemented enhanced record keeping or outside of class participation in an FFA event as part of their grading for a term. However, none of the participants discussed a change in how they instruct their students prior to or since affiliation membership took place at their school. One should note that 36% of respondents mentioned the three-circle model of instruction as a reason why their instruction did not change regardless of membership procedure. Additionally, this question and question five elicit the shortest answers, often one-word responses such as “no” or “none.” This indicates a similar motive for affiliation that question one indicated; affiliation was not chosen to boost enrollment or alter instruction. Based on the SCANS recommendations, FFA has emphasized affiliation membership to ensure all agriculture education students are receiving the maximum level of instruction, which is available with all the components; classroom instruction, SAE, and FFA (FFA, 2022b).

The final finding connects instructional practices and experiences together to determine if learning outcomes had changed with affiliation membership at a participant’s schools. As mentioned above with finding number four, there were negative short responses given. However, there was a theme that developed around the terms “understand” and “know.” The word cloud in figure 4.1 demonstrated this frequency. Participants indicated at nearly a 50% rate that students know why or understand why they are asked to do a task, learn a skill, or memorize material more readily with affiliation membership. Students see a connection between what they have always been instructed. The three pillars of agriculture education were added to the original

foundation laid in 1862 with the Morrill Act (Briers & McCubbins, 2021). Following the 1862, 1917, and 1928 anchors of SBAE history, one can see a steady growth in FFA membership until the 1980s Farm Crisis (Briers & McCubbins, 2021). Affiliation membership ensures the three-circle model of instruction is followed and has the potential to grow members for the organization.

After looking at responses to each question and the demographics of each participant, some interesting findings arise. All respondents with 11-15 years of experience were overall positive in their perception of affiliation membership. Of those with less than five years of experience, 75% were overall positive with their opinions of affiliation membership. Finally, 100% of male participants indicated a positive opinion of affiliation membership in response to the research questions posed, while the female data differed from program to program. Such findings indicate satisfaction with affiliation among varied years of experience. This satisfaction even includes those that were teaching agriculture prior to affiliation being an option in Kentucky. Affiliation has provided a positive experience to those that have always utilized affiliation from the beginning of their teaching career and those who have begun using the process during their career.

The findings from this study indicate an overall favorable perception of what affiliation memberships have done for students in agriculture programs across Kentucky. A greater sense of belonging for students as part of a family, an increase in involvement, and improved connections between classroom instruction and FFA activities are all indicators of the perceptions indicated by participants in this affiliation study. The benefits of FFA involvement extend beyond financial and even educational. FFA provides students with a place of belonging (Rose et al., 2016). While affiliation membership does not change instructional approaches nor increase program

enrollment, there are noticeable improvements to other areas of the agriculture program apparent to many participants.

Relationships to conclusions of other research

Chapter II discussed the history of SBAE and there was a substantial amount of research analyzing FFA involvement and the benefits that many sought when joining FFA. This sense of belonging was a consistent theme among many researchers, but perhaps most specifically the Rose et al. study from 2016. The study found that belonging was the key factor 96.2% of the time (Rose, et al., 2016). Once a student belonged to FFA, they had a sense of purpose and desired to remain a part of the group (Rose, et al.,2016). Affiliation provides automatic membership, but that membership, although not voluntary, does also provide automatic belonging. Students now have an organization to put on their resume, and the belonging does not get extinguished, but the study showed the belonging continues for years to come. This relationship provides another boost for affiliation membership when tying this study together with the 2016 study by Rose et al.

Practical significance

FFA chapters are a vital component of a comprehensive high school. When FFA chapters thrive, students benefit from the organization. This study provides agriculture educators with a thematic trend produced by affiliation. To build a successful FFA Chapter, the advisor must create buy-in from members and retain that involvement. Affiliation membership was credited with building programs for schools that were just beginning and for increasing involvement for programs looking to make a change following stagnated growth. In both cases, FFA membership increased with affiliation membership and more students were exposed to the organization. The

National FFA Board of Directors has a 100% membership goal for 2028 in order to ensure that all students are benefiting from FFA involvement (Deimler et al., 2021). While this goal seems unattainable, with 35 states yet to adopt full affiliation for all members, the study outlines where benefits lie with affiliation (Deimler et al., 2021).

Student growth in the areas of career preparation and leadership development is the goal of FFA. Crooms and Flowers (2020) found that non-members did not show a belief that FFA would help them academically, in reaching future academic goals, or with the ability to grow professionally. Additionally, those who chose not to join FFA perceived that FFA events and activities were not convenient for them to participate; the exact opposite perception of the members who were surveyed (Crooms & Flowers, 2001). Affiliation membership provides the leadership development component and career development event opportunities that are not always available inside the agriculture classroom but can be inside the classroom when students are members. Participants in the study indicated that affiliation membership removed a potential barrier for students to join, thus opening the door to opportunities not always realized by students who chose not to, or could not pay membership dues. Affiliation membership guarantees all members receive the leadership and career preparation training FFA can provide.

Finally, affiliation membership can assist in building community. The increase in membership creates a larger chapter, but also a chapter that more accurately reflects the student enrollment. No matter the demographic area that is present in a school or classroom, the same demographic make-up will be identifiable in the FFA membership. This creates a sense of community for members and allows them to feel comfortable as a part of the organization. Table 5.1 shows over 80% of students surveyed agreed that FFA provides a sense of belonging and feeling loved (Rose et al., 2016). 96.2% of students surveyed agreed that “FFA has made my

high school experience more enjoyable” (Rose et al., 2016). Such findings strongly support the social emotional requirements of CTE from Perkins V. This practical approach provides diversity for chapters and improves the understanding of others for each member.

Table 1

Participants School Engagement Relating to Love and Belonging Needs

Statements	Percentage Disagree	Percentage Agree	Percentage Unsure
FFA has made my high school experience more enjoyable.	0.5	96.2	2.3
FFA has helped me remain dedicated to school.	4.3	87.1	7.4
FFA has given me the ability to make friends at my school.	0.5	93.4	4.8
FFA has given me a place to call “home” within my school.	2.3	89.6	7.1
FFA is among my favorite activities at school.	0.5	95.2	3.3
FFA motivates me to attend school.	5.6	85.0	6.6
FFA is at least part of the reason why I remain active at my school.	9.1	81.0	6.6

Note. (n=394). From “The Benefits of FFA Membership as Part of Agricultural Education,” by Chelsea Rose, Carrie A. Stephens, Christopher Stripling, Tim Cross, Danielle E. Sanok, and Shelby Brawner, 2016, *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 57(2), p. 38.

P-20 implications

The four pillars of P-20 Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) are innovation, implementation, diversity, and leadership (Murray State, 2020). This study began with consultation with KDE to determine a need that existed within P-20 education. Leadership at KDE, particularly in the office of CTE indicated a need for studying affiliation membership and the perceived impact on FFA chapters across the state. As this study concludes, leadership is now aware of how affiliation membership in Kentucky has been implemented in chapters across

the commonwealth. Consultation with KDE is an example of the leadership SLO, and the study examined the implementation SLO when determining how affiliation was utilized.

Diversity was a target of this study. The diversity SLO was achieved with the varied chapters and demographic make-up of each chapter. Affiliation membership ensures the diversity of the FFA Chapter is representative of the school's diversity. A P-20 educator seeks to examine paths to improve diversity, and affiliation membership is one path where that can be achieved. Chapters that choose not to affiliate will not be able to create the same diversity in both their classroom and their FFA Chapter. Affiliation participants in this study indicated a greater level of diversity and wider range of inclusion for all students. The Hoover & Scanlon (1991) study detailed how those enrolled in agriculture education were "more likely white and male, with approximately one-fourth of these enrollees currently living on a farm" (p. 9). This same study found that students who had parents in agriculture or future ambitions in agriculture were more likely to be agriculture education enrollees, resulting in fewer non-traditional students in the classroom and potentially FFA (Hoover & Scanlon, 1991). When agriculture education programs have diverse classrooms, an affiliated chapter will also have a diverse FFA Chapter. States that use total affiliation membership had zero examples of a decrease in students joining FFA among growing Hispanic, Black, and suburban groups (Currie, 2017). This indicates that affiliation has allowed the high school populations to reflect the same growth as FFA membership (Currie, 2017). This diversity extends beyond race and gender, but includes socio-economic, agricultural heritage, background, and other dimensions of diversity.

Implementation of affiliation is another P-20 implication where a new approach can seem daunting or even counterintuitive. Looking at FFA membership decline and stagnation might cause one to consider adjusting the FFA, instead of adjusting the membership method.

Membership in FFA fell during World War II and again during the Farm Crisis of the 1980s (Sheehan & Moore, 2019). Figure 2.2 shows the rise in population mimics the growth of membership, until the 1940s. A similar stall occurred until affiliation was offered and adopted by various chapters and states (Sheehan & Moore, 2019). Recent climbs in membership can be attributed to affiliation, and a decline in 2014 coincides with the National FFA allowing chapters who were affiliated to opt back to traditional dues if they desired (Sheehan & Moore, 2019). The implementation of affiliation may have saved the FFA from seeing a new decline in membership and the perceptions identified in this study also indicate that implementing affiliation membership can decline in chapter participation and involvement.

These involvement increases greatly connect with the Leadership SLO of P-20. The leadership component of SBAE is through the FFA. A student who chooses to only be involved in the agriculture classroom will lack the leadership skills developed through FFA. A P-20 learner understands the leadership skills necessary for both educators and students at all levels of education. This research impacts P-20 by highlighting the leadership skills sought through FFA, offered through FFA, and developed through FFA. California FFA members attend more leadership conferences than all other FFA members across the entire country (CDE, 2017). This is no surprise, as the skills from such conferences are integral to the curriculum. CDE (2017) states, "Instruction intended to develop and/or enhance citizenship, leadership, and interpersonal skills, as defined in the Agriculture Content Standards, is clearly identified in courses and activities throughout the program" (p. 15). Chapters that choose not to affiliate do not guarantee students have these opportunities. Likewise, participants in the study highlighted the increased events, degrees, and contests gained with members being affiliated.

Finally, affiliation is an innovative approach to FFA membership. Affiliation originated in California, a state that boasts 100% membership (Rada et al., 2021). Prior to affiliation, California had just 38% of their students in agriculture classes as FFA members as recent as 1979 (McCabe, 2021). Upon the passage of the four innovative agriculture education bills, California witnessed a major shift in FFA membership and involvement. Innovation is the vehicle for idea advancement, and leaders must be willing to attempt new approaches while having the bravery to persist with those ideas even when they may struggle. This study allowed those with experience with affiliation to express their views on the effectiveness of the process. Participants hailed from chapters that had the willingness to attempt a new method of dues collection. They embraced the innovation behind such an approach, and this study may lead others to follow a similar path.

Limitations of the study

The title of this study indicates this is simply a view from Kentucky. In addition to that defined geographic region, the study elicited feedback from just 11 teachers. Results from a limited area and pool of participants, while dependable, is not a complete picture of affiliation membership nationwide, nor are there enough teachers who have experienced both affiliation and traditional dues. These limitations do not hinder the study, but they should be addressed to provide clarity on the themes presented. Affiliation in Kentucky is a relatively new initiative; therefore, a study at the national level or with states who have a longer experience with affiliation might provide a larger number of participants with experiences from both membership methods. The recent national climbs in membership can be attributed to affiliation membership, and the decline in 2014 coincides with the National FFA allowing chapters who were affiliated to return to traditional dues if they desired (Sheehan & Moore, 2019). Of the 11 participants,

only one had experience with affiliation membership at a different school in addition to where they currently teach. This factor also limited what the study could identify as a theme because school size and demographics could not be compared on a large scale.

Recommendations for future research

Findings from this study indicate that affiliation membership has improved FFA involvement, and this theme identified by participants has led to continued involvement for members. This has included state and American degree recipients who got their start in FFA by default. Affiliation allows students to achieve things that they not only thought was impossible, but that truly was impossible, because these students were not even members. The success or achievements of members amplifies their ability to promote FFA benefits to non-members; so, another way to increase membership can be derived from increased involvement of those who are already members, effectively creating a snowball of membership and involvement (Talbert & Balschweid, 2004). Future studies should examine if affiliation membership could in time, show an increase in course demand, enrollment, and eventually agriculture educator employment opportunities. Studies should also identify students who would not have joined FFA without affiliation membership, and researchers could follow their career paths. The growing population contrasted with the continued exodus from the farm create a crucial need for an agriculture workforce that is equipped educationally and financially. A question to consider is, what impact affiliation membership has played in providing workers for the agriculture workforce? Determining the long-term impact of FFA affiliation membership could greatly benefit agriculture education and the continued growth of the National FFA Organization.

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Appendix A



Institutional Review Board

328 Wells Hall
 Murray, KY 40371-3398
 770-809-2916 • msu.ibr@murraystate.edu

TO: Kristie Guffey, School of Agriculture

FROM: Jonathan Baskin, IRB Coordinator 

DATE: 11/19/2022

RE: Human Subjects Protocol I.D. – IRB # 23-083

The IRB has completed its review of your student's Level 1 protocol entitled *The Role Affiliation Membership Plays in an FFA Chapter: A Qualitative View from Kentucky*. After review and consideration, the IRB has determined that the research, as described in the protocol form, will be conducted in compliance with Murray State University guidelines for the protection of human participants.

The forms and materials that have been approved for use in this research study are attached to the email containing this letter. These are the forms and materials that must be presented to the subjects. Use of any process or forms other than those approved by the IRB will be considered misconduct in research as stated in the MSU IRB Procedures and Guidelines section 20.3.

Your stated data collection period is from 11/19/2022 to 5/1/2023.

If data collection extends beyond this period, please submit an Amendment to an Approved Protocol form detailing the new data collection period and the reason for the change.

This Level 1 approval is valid until 11/18/2023.

If data collection and analysis extends beyond this date, the research project must be reviewed as a continuation project by the IRB prior to the end of the approval period, 11/18/2023. You must reapply for IRB approval by submitting a Project Update and Closure form (available at murraystate.edu/ibr). You must allow ample time for IRB processing and decision prior to your expiration date, or your research must stop until such time that IRB approval is received. If the research project is completed by the end of the approval period, then a Project Update and Closure form must be submitted for IRB review so that your protocol may be closed. It is your responsibility to submit the appropriate paperwork in a timely manner.

The protocol is approved. You may begin data collection now.

Opportunity
 afforded

murraystate.edu

Appendix B

FFA Chapters that chose affiliation membership were gathered from the Kentucky Department of Education Office for Career and Technical Education through an email

Chapters who are or have affiliated



Falwell, Jacob

To: Chaliff, Matt - Division of Student Transition and Career Readiness;
Davis, Brandon K - Division of Student Transition and Career Readiness

Bcc: Kristie Guffey; Falwell, Jacob



Sat 11/19/2022 7:45 PM

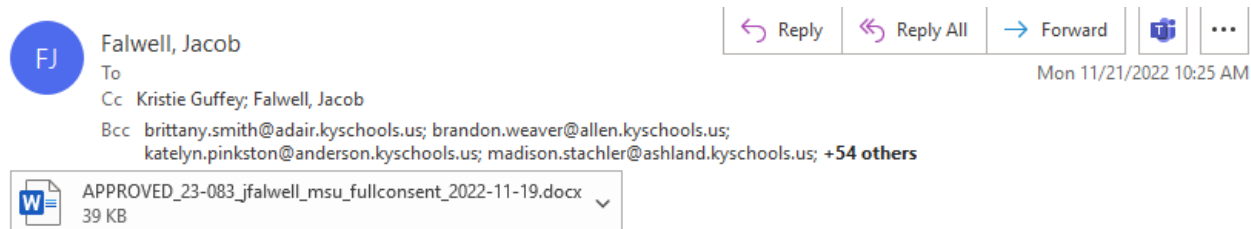
Mr. Chaliff and Mr. Davis:

I have been approved to conduct a study at Murray State University on affiliation membership in Kentucky FFA Chapters, IRB #23-083. The study is titled: The Role Affiliation Membership Plays in an FFA Chapter: A Qualitative View from Kentucky. I am requesting a list of FFA chapters in Kentucky that are currently affiliated and a list of chapters that have affiliated in the past years. Additionally, I would request a contact person (FFA advisor (s)) for each chapter so that I can request an interview with them in the coming months.

Thank you so much for your consideration.
Jacob Falwell

Appendix C

From this list of programs, emails were sent to those chapters who have experienced affiliation membership for more than three years requesting their assistance in this study



Greetings,

My name is Jacob Falwell, and I am an agriculture teacher at Calloway County High School. Today, I am however writing you as a student at Murray State University. Currently, I have been approved to conduct a study titled: The Role Affiliation Membership Plays in an FFA Chapter: A Qualitative View from Kentucky. Mr. Chaliff and Mr. Davis indicated a study of affiliation membership would be beneficial for Kentucky FFA. After they deemed the study valuable I was able to get information from them indicating that your chapter has experience as an affiliated chapter.

I am requesting your cooperation by participating in an interview with me either in person or via zoom. In person interviews are scheduled to occur at the KAAE Winter Professional Development in Elizabethtown, KY on December 28, 2022. I will have donuts and coffee available in a designated room. Please consider stopping by for a short interview (less than 30 minutes) and some donuts/coffee. An informed consent for the study is attached, but I will also have a copy to sign on site.

If the in-person interview does not work for your schedule or weather hinders travel, then I will need to conduct the interview via zoom. Please reply to this email if you know your plans for attending or not attending the KAAE Winter Professional Development in Elizabethtown. For those who are confident they will not be attending the Winter PD in Elizabethtown, I would like to set-up a zoom interview with you in the next month at a time conducive to your schedule.

Thank you so much for your consideration.
 Jacob Falwell

Appendix D

Email request for interview location at Winter Professional Development

Winter PD



Falwell, Jacob

To: Davis, Brandon K - Division of Student Transition and Career Readiness;
Chaliff, Matt - Division of Student Transition and Career Readiness

Bcc: Kristie Guffey; Falwell, Jacob

 Reply

 Reply All

 Forward



Sat 11/19/2022 7:41 PM

Mr. Chaliff and Mr. Davis:

I have been approved to conduct a study at Murray State University (IRB #23-083) on affiliation membership in Kentucky FFA Chapters. The study is titled: The Role Affiliation Membership Plays in an FFA Chapter: A Qualitative View from Kentucky. I am requesting a room location at the KAAE Winter Professional Development in Elizabethtown, KY to interview individuals for this study. Would this be a possibility? If so, please let me know a room location as soon as possible so I can invite potential participants to attend and interview.

Thank you so much for your consideration.
Jacob Falwell

Appendix E

Research Participation Consent Form



Hutson School of Agriculture

Study Title: The Role Affiliation Membership Plays in an FFA Chapter: A Qualitative View from Kentucky

Primary Investigator: Jacob Falwell, School of Agriculture

Faculty Sponsor Contact: Kristie Guffey, (270) 809-5624, kguffey@murraystate.edu

You are being invited to participate in a research study conducted through Murray State University. This form contains information you will need to help you decide whether to be in this research study or not. You must be at least 18 years old to participate. Please read the form carefully and ask the study team member(s) questions about anything that is not clear. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

1. **Nature and Purpose of Project:** The purpose of this study is to determine the perceptions of agriculture teachers who have experienced affiliation membership. The project is part of the primary investigator's doctoral thesis.
2. **Participant Selection:** You are being asked to participate because you have served as an FFA advisor of a chapter that has used affiliation membership in the FFA.
3. **Explanation of Procedures:** We will conduct interviews that will take about 30 minutes to complete.
4. **Recordings/Photographs:** We will hold Zoom recordings to obtain an accurate transcript of responses. Recording is required and participants should not enroll in the study if they do not want to be recorded.
5. **Discomforts and Risks:** The possible risks and/or discomforts associated with the being in the study include, discomforts acknowledging chapter finances and discomfort discussing the decision-making process behind a chapter's membership choices based upon internal chapter decision making. All responses from online participants will be treated confidentially and stored on a password protected computer. However, we are unable to guarantee the security of the computer on which you choose to enter your responses. Information (or data) you enter, and websites you visit online can be tracked, captured, corrupted, lost, or otherwise misused.
6. **Benefits:** This study is not designed to benefit you directly. However, your participation may help to increase our understanding of FFA affiliation membership.
7. **Confidentiality:** Your identity will be known to the researchers, but the information you provide will be kept confidential.
8. **Refusal/Withdrawal:** Your participation is strictly voluntary, and you are free to withdraw/stop participating at any time with absolutely no penalty. The participant is free to skip any questions that he/she would prefer not to answer.
9. **Contact Information:** Any questions about the procedures or conduct of this research should be brought to the attention of Kristie Guffey, (270) 809-5624 or kguffey@murraystate.edu. If you would like to know the results of this study, please contact Kristie Guffey.

Your continued participation indicates that this study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study.

The dated approval stamp on this document indicates that this project has been reviewed and approved by the Murray State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you should contact the MSU IRB Coordinator at (270) 809-2916 or msu.ibr@murraystate.edu.

Participant's Name (printed): _____

 (Signature of Participant) (Date)

 (Signature of Person Obtaining Consent) (Date)

Appendix F

All participants who chose to be interviewed via Zoom were provided the Zoom link via their school email

RE: [EXTERNAL MAIL]RE: [EXTERNAL MAIL]RE: [EXTERNAL MAIL]FFA Affiliation Members...



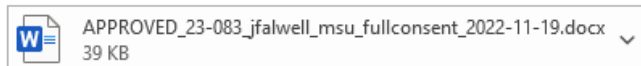
Falwell, Jacob

To [REDACTED]

Cc Falwell, Jacob



Fri 12/2/2022 8:46 AM



Thanks for agreeing to meet for this research interview. A link for our zoom interview is below. I would request that you complete the attached consent form and return to me before we meet today (via zoom) at 3:20 PM CST.

If you have trouble with the form or the link please don't hesitate to reach out to me via email.

Thanks again!

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://murraystate.zoom.us/j/2672078055>

Meeting ID: 267 207 8055

One tap mobile

+13126266799,,2672078055# US (Chicago)

+16469313860,,2672078055# US

Dial by your location

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 646 931 3860 US

+1 929 436 2866 US (New York)

+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)

+1 305 224 1968 US

+1 208 205 2225 US

Appendix G

These demographic questions will be followed by the interview protocol

Demographic Question 1: How many years have you been teaching agriculture?

Demographic Question 2: Do you currently teach in a single-teacher or multi-teacher agriculture department?

Demographic Question 3: Please indicate your gender:

Demographic Question 4: How many years have you used affiliation membership at your current school?

Demographic Question 5: How many years total have you used affiliation membership?

Appendix H

Interview protocol

Enrollment Research Question 1: What impact has FFA affiliation membership played on agriculture course enrollment?

Involvement Research Question 1: How has Career Development Events (CDE) and Leadership Development Events (LDE) participation been impacted by FFA affiliation membership?

Involvement Research Question 2: How has FFA affiliation membership impacted FFA involvement in addition to Career Development Events (CDE) and Leadership Development Events (LDE)?

Outcome Research Question 1: How has classroom instruction changed since the beginning of FFA affiliation membership?

Outcome Research Question 2: What learning outcomes have been altered after participation in the FFA affiliation membership?